

The Muslim Sunrise

Spring 2017
\$5.00

"In the Latter Days, the sun shall rise from the West"

Holy Prophet Muhammad(Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)



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House of God

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 207 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjab province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah).

The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity.

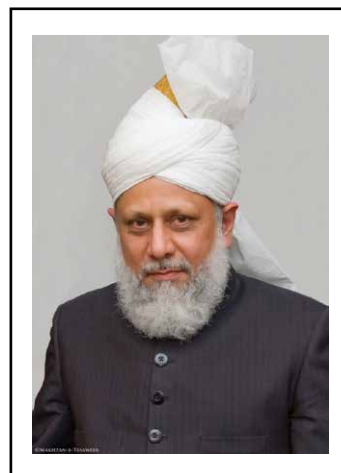
Hazrat Ahmad (as) proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: "The religion of the people of the right path" (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qura'nic teaching:

"There is no compulsion in religion" (2:257).

It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason. After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah (as).

www.alislam.org

www.muslimsunrise.com



Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad,
Khalifatul Masih V (aba)

The Muslim Sunrise

www.muslimsunrise.com

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Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the Muslim Sunrise, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever-changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presents their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

The Muslim Sunrise welcomes letters to the Editor, Questions and Submissions.

Email us at MuslimSunrise@Ahmadiyya.us or go online to www.MuslimSunrise.com



Acronyms for salutations used in this publication

- sa: Sallallāhu 'Alaihi Wa Sallam (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him)
as: 'Alaihis-Salām (may peace be upon him)
ra: Radhi-Allahu 'Anhu/'Anha (may Allah be pleased with him/her)
rh: Rahimahullāhu Ta'ālā (may Allah shower His mercy on him)
aba: Ayyadahullāhu Ta'ālā Bi-Nasrihil-'Azīz (may Allah support him with His mighty help)

Verse numbers in the references from the Holy Qur'ān count Tasmiya at the beginning of a chapter as the first verse.

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Muslims follow the name of God's prophets with the prayer *alaihis salaam* or 'may peace be upon him,' and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaihi wasallam* or 'may peace and blessings of God be upon him.' Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or 'may Allah be pleased with him/her.' While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

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FROM THE HOLY QUR'AN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ①

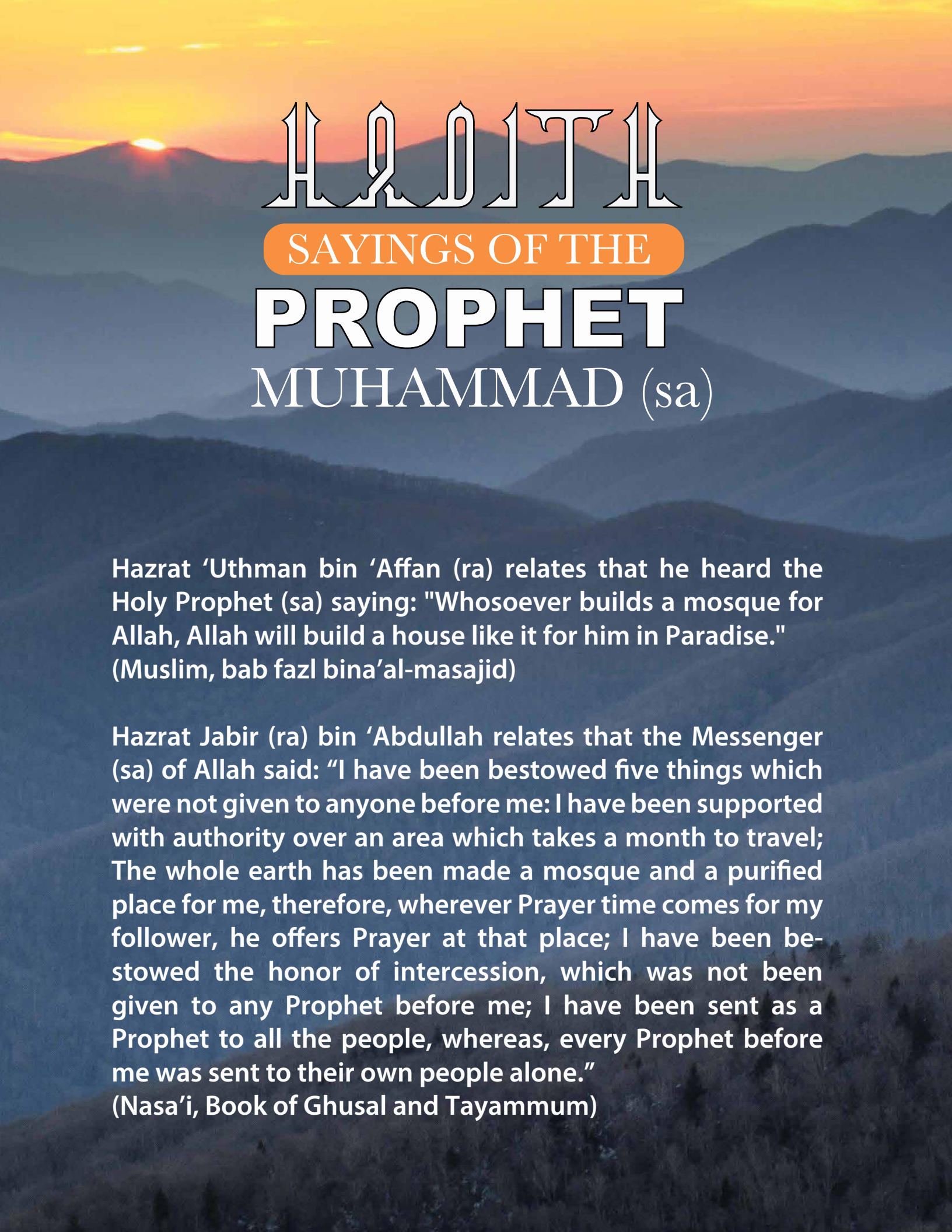
إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسْجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ أَمِنَ بِاللَّهِ
وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى
الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ ۖ فَعَسَى
أُولَٰئِكَ أَنْ يَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُهْتَدِينَ ①٨

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ
أَحَدًا ۖ ①٩

In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful.

He alone can keep the Mosques of Allah in a good and flourishing condition who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, and observes Prayer, and pays the Zakat, and fears none but Allah; so these it is who may be among those who reach the goal. (The Holy Qur'an, 9:18)

And all places of worship belong to Allah; so call not on any one beside Allah. (The Holy Qur'an, 72:19)



HADITH

SAYINGS OF THE

PROPHET

MUHAMMAD (sa)

Hazrat 'Uthman bin 'Affan (ra) relates that he heard the Holy Prophet (sa) saying: "Whosoever builds a mosque for Allah, Allah will build a house like it for him in Paradise."
(Muslim, bab fazl bina'al-masajid)

Hazrat Jabir (ra) bin 'Abdullah relates that the Messenger (sa) of Allah said: "I have been bestowed five things which were not given to anyone before me: I have been supported with authority over an area which takes a month to travel; The whole earth has been made a mosque and a purified place for me, therefore, wherever Prayer time comes for my follower, he offers Prayer at that place; I have been bestowed the honor of intercession, which was not been given to any Prophet before me; I have been sent as a Prophet to all the people, whereas, every Prophet before me was sent to their own people alone."
(Nasa'i, Book of Ghusal and Tayammum)

EDITORIAL

SPRING 2017

A synagogue, church, mosque or temple – a house of God is a sacred place for co-religious congregations to gather and to remember their Maker. God is everywhere, considered by most to be Unseen, or seated on His throne in the heavens, accessible through prayer offered anywhere, at any time. Nevertheless, His devotees feel the need for a designated place to pour out their hearts to Him in supplications, to worship Him in prescribed devotional and ritual observances, to listen to sermons, to share in the solemnization of marriage and death, and to become more unified with one another in spirituality and fellowship.

Building a house of God is an act of virtue, performed to earn His pleasure. Populating it on a regular basis with sincere believers is crucial in keeping their faith alive. With the passage of time, most of the houses of God that were once simple in structure became beautiful and splendid buildings, often awe-inspiring both on the exterior and the interior. Entrance gates, walls, arches, domes, minarets, steeples and porches were developed; these structures became spacious enough to hold thousands, and, based upon the dictates of the given faith, replete with architectural and artistic marvels, ornate depictions of religious symbols and stories, sacred writings, statues and icons.

In the present issue of the Muslim Sunrise, we are presenting articles covering selected places of worship in the Abrahamic faith traditions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam – namely, 'Solomon's Temple', 'The Orthodox Church', 'The Holy Kabaah'. Other famous mosques located in the USA, the UK, and one in China, are also portrayed. You will find an interesting book review on 'Ahmadiyya Mosques around the World', as well as articles describing 'The Role of Mosques in Islam', and contemplating 'How Can We Build the Third Temple?'

The theme 'House of God' is so vast that we feel far more could be written on it; we hope to continue to cover this important topic in the future.

For now though, we invite you to read this initial set of inspiring articles, hoping you enjoy them. As always, we welcome your feedback.

Mubasher Ahmad
Editor-in-Chief

CHURCH
SYNAGOGUE
MOSQUE
TEMPLE

Houses
of
God

IN THE WORDS OF THE PROMISED MESSIAH^(as)

Need for Mosques

“Mosque is House of God and the fountain-head of all truths and all spiritual cognizance’s.” (1)

There is a great need for mosques in our Community at this time. A mosque is a House of God. In any village or town where a mosque is established, it is as if the foundation of our Community’s progress is laid down there. In any village or town, where Muslims are in small numbers or none at all, and you want to see Islam’s growth, then a mosque should be built there, and God Himself will draw Muslims to that place. However, there is one condition attached to it, which is that the intent in building a mosque should be sincere. It should be done only for the sake of Allah. No selfish motive or mischief should ever be behind it. Only then God will bless it.

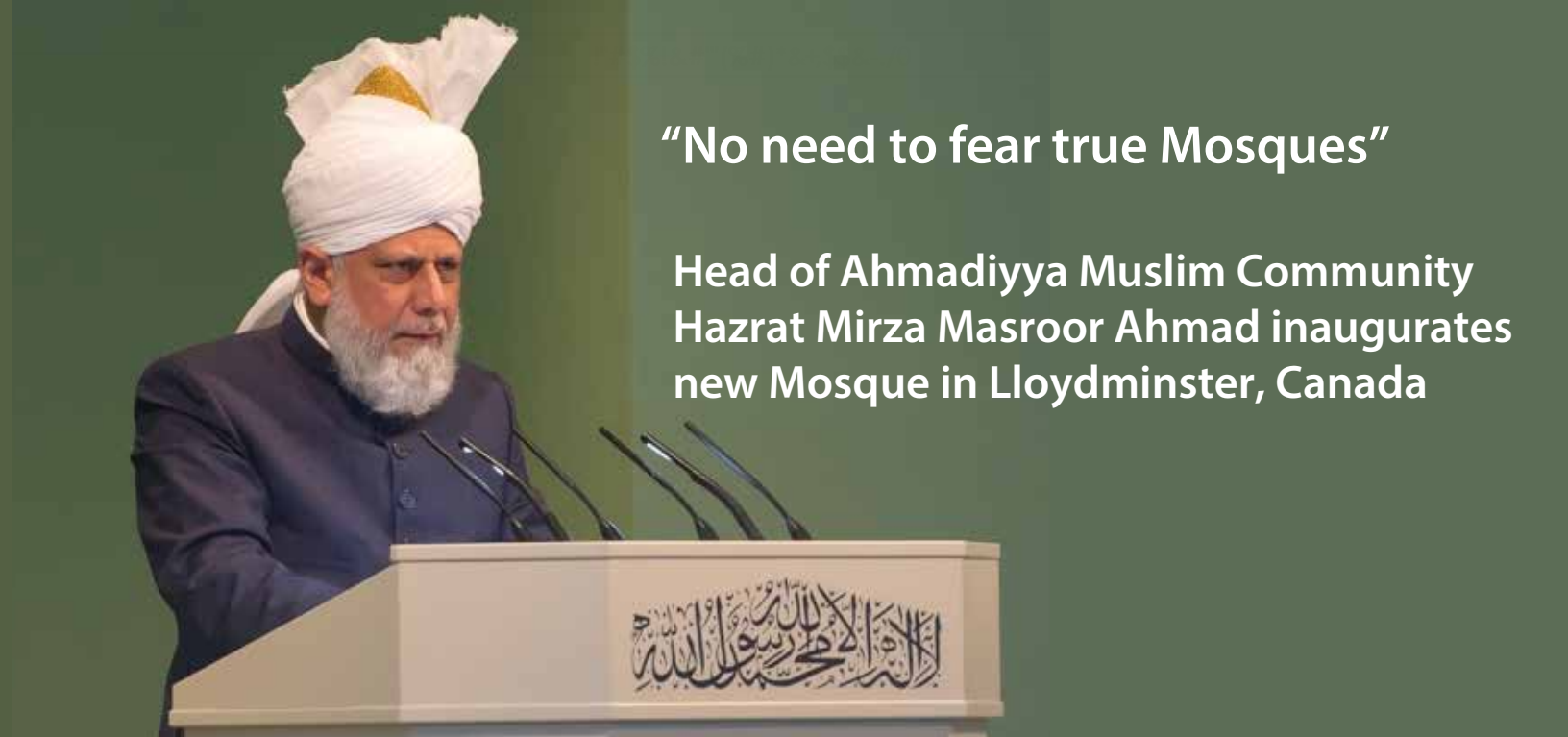
It is not necessary that a mosque is decorative or made of strong structure. Simply, a plot of land should be enclosed and boundary for a mosque marked, and a roof put up made of wooden planks to secure from rain. God does not like lavish formalities. The mosque of the Prophet (sa) was constructed with some branches of date-palm trees, and stayed that way. Later, Hazrat Usman, who was interested in buildings, had it constructed into a solid structure in his era. Sometime I think that the names of Hazrat Sulaiman and Usman rhyme well, and maybe that’s why both of them had great interest in things like that. What I want to say is that the Community should have its own mosque, and there should be an imam from within the Community who should preach; and the Community members need to get together to offer congregational Prayer in that mosque. There is lot of blessing in Community and unity. Remaining scattered creates discord. This is the time to put much emphasis on union and harmony, and trivial matters which cause discord should be laid aside. (2)



Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as)
The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

References:

- 1 Malfoozat, Published 1984 vol 8, p. 400
- 2 Malfoozat, Published 1984 vol 7, pp. 119-120



“No need to fear true Mosques”

Head of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community
Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad inaugurates
new Mosque in Lloydminster, Canada

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is pleased to announce that on November 5, 2016, His Holiness, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the World Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, the Fifth Khalifa (Caliph), inaugurated the Baitul Amman Mosque in Lloydminster, Saskatchewan in Canada.

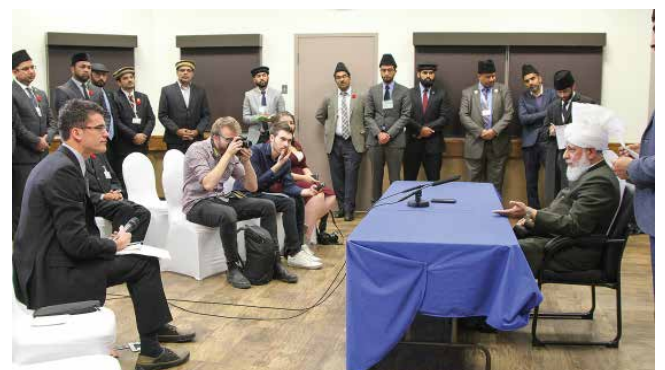
Upon arrival at the Mosque, His Holiness unveiled a plaque to commemorate the opening, which was followed by a silent prayer. Thereafter, His Holiness led the evening and night prayers from the new Mosque.

The following day, November 6, 2016, a special reception was held to mark the opening of the new Mosque in which Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad delivered the keynote address.

During his address, His Holiness spoke of the true purpose of mosques and how the new Mosque would not only be a place to worship God Almighty, but would also prove a means of serving and protecting all people.

His Holiness said that at a time when there was widespread fear of Islam, it was a sign of open heartedness and “extraordinary courage” that the guests had attended an Islamic event.

His Holiness then explained in detail the true objectives of building Mosques.





Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“The Arabic word for Mosque is ‘Masjid’ and this word literally means a place for people to congregate in complete humility and submission in order to worship God Almighty. If a person enters a Mosque with this meek spirit, considering himself to be worthless, he can never wish any type of harm on others or be the cause of discord or animosity.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“A Muslim who offers his prayers with humility is a person who is kind, caring and merciful and who strives to stay away from immorality, illegal activity and all forms of evil. Rather than promoting disorder or division, Mosques are a means of bringing people together in humility for the worship of their Creator.”



His Holiness quoted chapter 5, verse 3 of the Holy Quran, which states,

“And let not the enmity of a people that they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque, incite you to transgress.”

Explaining this verse, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Here, Allah the Almighty prohibited those early Muslims who had been mercilessly persecuted from responding unjustly or transgressing against their oppressors, even though they had sought to prevent them from entering the Holy Kaaba, the Sacred Mosque, which is the most revered place in Islam.”

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

“Consequently, the Holy Quran has laid down an unprecedented standard of tolerance, justice and forbearance for Muslims to abide by, wherein they are duty-bound to act righteously, with grace and fairness, even to those who seek to deny them their religious freedom... Therefore, let it be clear that there is no need to fear true Mosques because they are not places of vengeance or hatred but are abodes of peace, harmony and unity built for the sake of worshipping God Almighty.”

His Holiness also quoted chapter 4, verse 37 of the Holy Quran which calls on Muslims to show kindness towards

“parents, and to kindred, and orphans, and the needy, and to the neighbor who is a kinsman and the neighbor who is a stranger, and the companion by your side.”

Commenting on this verse, the Caliph said that it required Muslims to lovingly serve all of mankind, irrespective of color, caste or creed.

His Holiness said that Mosques of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community reflected the Quranic spirit of benevolence and were built with the dual objectives of fulfilling the rights of God Almighty and also fulfilling the rights of mankind.

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

“Our Mosques are built with the purpose of bringing people together and serving our neighbors and the local society. Our Mosques are beacons of light radi-

ating peace, love and humanity. Wherever we have built Mosques or we have established Ahmadi communities we seek to alleviate the suffering of the local people because Allah the Almighty has linked the fulfillment of His rights with the fulfillment of the rights of humanity. Our faith teaches us that our worship and our prayers are worthless if we fail to love, support and cherish those around us."

His Holiness gave the example of the charitable initiatives in Africa where the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was providing clean drinking water, healthcare and education by building water pumps, hospitals and schools in some of the most deprived parts of the world.

Explaining the positive effects of the humanitarian endeavors of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said:

"Instead of carrying earthen vessels upon their heads for hours on end, those children are now being educated in schools that our community has established. We are seeking to free them from the bondage of their poverty and help them stand upon their own feet so that they can grow to serve not only their families but also their nations."

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad continued:

"We consider it to be our good fortune to remove the heavy weight of desperation from the shoulders of such disadvantaged people. This is true Islam, wherein apart from worshipping God Almighty, Muslims strive earnestly to provide comfort to others."

Concluding his address, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad said that the local people who lived near the Mosque would soon come to see that the new Mosque would prove to be a "centre of peace for all of mankind".

Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad prayed:

"I pray that our neighbors and indeed all members of the society come to see and witness for them-

selves the highest standards of benevolence, care and consideration from the local Ahmadi Muslims. And I pray that that we are never a cause of pain or concern for anyone. I am confident that the local Ahmadi Muslims will act upon this and will strive to serve humanity with selflessness and open hearts." Before the keynote address, a welcome address was given by the National President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Canada, Lal Khan Malik followed by remarks by the Mayor-elect of Lloydminster, Mr. Gerard Albers who welcomed Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad to the city. Thereafter, various other dignitaries also took to the stage.

Colleen Young, MLA Saskatchewan Province said: "Your Holiness, under your leadership, we can see and we can feel in our province and in my constituency and in our city, how the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is engaged to serve humanity... Here in Canada and Saskatchewan, we share your vision of love for all and hatred for none."

Jason Kenney, Former Federal Minister of Integration and Federal Minister of Defense, said:

"The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Canada is a community that is a model for integration for maintaining its faith and identity, in the Canadian model of pluralism. A community that is fully Muslim and fully Canadian and is therefore a wonderful example to newcomers from across the world."

John Gormley, former politician and current host of a well-known radio talk show said:

"In terms of community outreach, in terms of civic engagement, in terms of building a better Canada, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's national outreach is absolutely an inspiration for us." Both prior to and after the reception, His Holiness met personally with a number of guests and also held a press conference with local media representatives.

The Role of the Mosque in Islam

Falahuddin Shams

The Purpose of Creation

The Ka'ba was established to fulfil the need of human beings to worship one God. Philosophers have been asking questions over the centuries: Why are we here? What is the purpose of our existence? The Holy Qur'an has answered these questions by stating:

"I have not created the Jinn and men but that they may worship Me."(1)

So the first house of worship was built to fulfil the purpose of our being created, the worship of Allah. This House was built for the whole of mankind. "Mankind" indicates that this house was constructed for neither Muslims nor Christians, nor any other particular nation. It was built for the whole of mankind for carrying out the worship of Allah. It also held a hidden prophecy that one day the whole of mankind would gather together under one Prophet [Muhammad (sa)] under the banner of one faith and facing this house altogether. In this house, people of all races, rich or poor, male or female, standing as equals in front of God, have been worshipping their Creator.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And remember the time when We made the House a resort for mankind and a place of security; and take ye the station of Abraham as a place of Prayer. And We commanded Abraham and Ishmael, saying, 'Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in Prayer.'"(2)

Foremost use of the mosque: Prayers

It is impossible to discuss the role or use of the mosque without mentioning its use for the prescribed congregational prayers. Ideally, the five prescribed Islamic Prayers must be offered in congregation. Surah Al-Fatiha is a required recitation in the five daily prayers. Prescribed prayer, Salat, is not complete if Surah Al-Fatiha is not recited at least once. Surah Al-Fatiha uses the plural form in addressing Allah and also the plural from the worshipper(s). This Surah describes the glory of God and our relationship to Him as being dependent on Him. We read in Surah Al-Fatiha:

"Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help."

"Guide us in the right path."(3)



Ka'ba during Ottoman Empire Period

In both of these verses, the plural form is used, being clear that the Surah (chapter) is being recited by an entire congregation and not by a single person.

It is through the establishment of five daily prayers in the mosque that the Holy Prophet (sa) established worship of one God around the globe, twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. This is an accomplishment that no other Prophet has been able to do.

When the five daily prayers were established, people did not know that the earth was round. Now we know that because it is round and revolves around the sun, at any given moment, it is time for one of the five prayers somewhere in the world. Thus worship of God is being performed at every moment on this earth. This cannot be accomplished by weekly services.

In reference to the mosque, the Holy Prophet (sa) said:

"Also eat and drink while you pass by the gardens of Jannah (Paradise)". Hazrat Abu Hurairah (ra) says that I asked the Holy Prophet (sa): 'O Prophet of Allah! What are the gardens of Jannah?' The Holy Prophet (sa) replied that mosques are the gardens of Jannah. Then he asked: 'O Prophet of Allah! What is meant by eating and drinking from the gardens of Jannah?' The Holy Prophet (sa) said it is the remembrance of Allah, 'Tasbi'h': repetitive utterances of short sentences in praise and glorification of Allah and reciting poems about Allah; to say Subhan Allah, Alhamdulillah, La illaha illa Allah, Allahu Akbar. Saying all this is like eating and drinking from Jannah."(4)

Importance of going to the mosque for prayers

It is a well-known Hadith of the Holy Prophet (sa) that congregational prayers has 27 times the reward as opposed to prayers offered alone.

Abu Hurairah (ra) relates: A blind person came to the Holy Prophet (sa) and explained that he does not have anyone who can walk him to the mosque so he should be allowed to say his prayers at home. The Holy Prophet (sa) gave him permission. As he was leaving, the Holy Prophet (sa) asked him if he can hear the Adhan from the mosque when he is home. He answered in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet (sa) then told him that he must perform his prayers in the mosque. (5)

Hazrat Ibn Umar relates that once, the Holy Prophet (sa) was late in coming to the Isha Prayer because of other activities that he was busy with. Many of us fell asleep and woke up again and again. When the Holy Prophet (sa) arrived he announced that there is no other community beside you who waits to say their prayers. (6)

Example of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and the Promised Messiah (as):

We find in the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (sa) that his heart was in his mosque. Physically, when he came out of his residence, he was in his mosque. He conducted all of his public affairs in the mosque. He did not have a conference room or a private office. If any delegation or guests, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, came to see him, he met them in his mosque. His regularity of performing Prayers in the mosque is especially noteworthy. Even in his last few days on this earth, when he could not even walk without help, he came to the mosque to perform his prayer.

We find a similar example of the Promised Messiah (as) who spent a good amount of time in the mosque even before his claim of being a Messiah and Mahdi. The Al-Aqsa Mosque in Qadian was built by his father. His father appointed Mian Jaan Muhammad Kashmiri to lead the prayers in this mosque. During his youth, the Promised Messiah (as) performed all his prayers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Mian Jan Muhammad was the uncle of my grandfather Mian Imamuddin. Whenever my grandfather and his two brothers would visit Qadian to see their relatives, they would go to Al-Aqsa mosque to say their prayers. It has been related and is recorded in Seeratul Mahdi Part III, that many times, there was no one else in the mosque at prayer times other than the Promised Messiah (as). He was always there.

A blind person came to the Holy Prophet (sa) and explained that he does not have anyone who can walk him to the mosque so he should be allowed to say his prayers at home. The Holy Prophet (sa) gave him permission. As he was leaving, the Holy Prophet (sa) asked him if he can hear the Adhan from the mosque when he is home. He answered in the affirmative. The Holy Prophet (sa) then told him that he must perform his prayers in the mosque.



Al-Aqsa Mosque in Qadian

Although the Al-Aqsa mosque in Qadian was at a close distance to the residence of the Promised Messiah (as), it was not close enough. So he established Mubarak Mosque which was attached to his residence. With this mosque, he was enabled to enjoy the same arrangement as the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) had in his mosque. When the Promised Messiah (as) would come out of his residence, he was in the mosque. It can be said that the mosque and the residence were part of each other in both of these cases.

Etiquette of the mosque

We have been taught that when we go to the mosque we should be clean inside and out, wear clean clothes and be appropriate in every way to present ourselves to God. We should use perfume, although not so much that could cause discomfort to other worshippers, and stay away from eating food such as garlic and raw onions immediately prior to going to the mosque so that our breath should not offend fellow worshippers. We should also make sure that the mosque itself is kept in an orderly and clean condition at all times.

Hazrat Wasila bin Aqsa (ra) relates: The Holy Prophet (sa) said to keep the following away from the mosque:

"Very young children, adults who are not in their senses, matters of trade/buying/selling, your disputes, raising voices, drawing your swords. He also stated that you should make washrooms near the doors of the mosques and use perfume when coming to Jumu'ah Prayers." (7)

Keep the mosque clean and presentable and show excellent behavior because it is the House of Allah. Allah says in Holy Qur'an: "He alone can keep the mosques of Allah in a good and flourishing condition who believes in Allah and the Last Day, and observes prayer, and pays the Zakat, and fears none but Allah; so these it is who may be among those who reach the goal." (8)

The mosque is a place of spiritual development since all activities in mosques are for Allah's pleasure. It provides facilities for spiritual advancement, activities for children and adults, classes to be taught for religious education and a center for discussion of the propagation of Islam.

Closing

We should populate the mosque according to the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (sa) and the desire of the Promised Messiah (as).

Hazrat Abu Musa (ra) relates that the Holy Prophet (sa) said: "Among the people who earn the highest reward from Allah are the ones who come to mosque from a distance. After them, the ones who come even from a farther distance. The person who waits and performs prayers behind an Imam earns more reward than the one who goes ahead and say his prayer so he can go to sleep." (9)

At the end I quote Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba):

"Merely being happy over the fact that we have constructed a mosque and then showing up very rarely for Salat, and embedding more fear of people than Allah's fear, greediness for worldly pleasures and giving importance to worldly matters and forgetting the true essence of the purpose of the mosque, might help us earn temporary good, but will not be successful in earning Allah's continuous blessings. Therefore Allah says that the true population of mosques is from people who grow through their faith and good acts." (10)

Let us hope and pray that we can fulfil our responsibilities to populate the mosque by going regularly for congregational prayers and fulfil the purpose of our creation: the worship of one God, Ameen.

References:

- 1 Holy Qur'an: 51:57
- 2 Holy Qur'an: 2:126
- 3 Holy Qur'an: 1:5-6
- 4 Sunan At -Tirmidhi, Hadith 3509
- 5 Sahih Muslim Kitabul Masajid, Hadith 1044
- 6 Sunan Abi Daud Kitabul Taharah, Hadith 171
- 7 Sunan Ibn Maaja Kitabul Masajid, Hadith 742
- 8 Holy Qur'an: 9:18
- 9 Bukhari Kitabul Adhan, Hadith 613
- 10 Friday Sermon, Nov 4, 2016

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The Holy Ka'ba – the First House of God

Dr. Muhammad Zafar Iqbal

Followers of all faiths and traditions, including the established major religions in the world worship the Creator in their own way, form or fashion. Every place of worship is considered house of the Almighty God, the creator of the universe. It is revered and considered sacred by its worshippers. Millions of Muslims from all over the world during the annual pilgrimage, the Hajj, converge at Islam's most sacred place of worship, the Holy Ka'ba. It is the focal point of the daily worship of hundreds of millions of Muslims around the world who turn towards it five times daily in their Prayers. The Ka'ba is located in the center of Islam's most sacred mosque, Al-Masjid Al-Haram, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. The Holy Qur'an has referred to the Ka'ba with several different names. Some of these are, 'Al-Bayt' (the House), 'Al-Bayt-Al-Ateeq' (the Ancient House), and 'Awal-Bayt' (the First House).

Origin

There is a legend about the origin of Ka'ba and Temple Mount narrated by Yaseen A Malik in his book, "The Tale of Two Sanctuaries." He writes:

"Adam dwelt in the Garden of Eden, and Yahweh fashioned for him a spouse, Eve. Yahovah said, 'Eat and drink whatever you like of the Garden but come not near the forbidden tree. ... But Satan (Iblis) beguiled them, and ... they ate the fruit of the forbidden tree. Yahovah sent them to Earth. ... Eve landed in present day Jerusalem. And Adam landed in the Bakka (Mecca) valley. Angel Gabriel showed Adam how to build a House. This is the First House of Yahweh. Later on, with the help of Angel Gabriel, Adam went looking for Eve and found her in Jerusalem. So they built the Second Sanctuary called the Temple Mount (1)."

Because of the location of the Ka'ba (in a valley) it was prone to floods and natural erosion. Therefore, it had to be rebuilt on several occasions. In his article, 'The History of the Ka'ba', Fazal Ahmad writes, "After Adam (as), it is thought that it was rebuilt by his son Seth (as) (2)."

The Qur'an explicitly mentions the incident when Prophet Abraham (as), along with his son Ishmael (as) re-built the Ka'ba and purified it in order to worship the One true God and is credited with the distinction of the 'Place of Abraham'. The Holy Qur'an states: "Surely the first house



founded for mankind is that at Becca (the valley of Mecca), abounding in blessings and a guidance for all peoples. In it are manifest Signs; it is the place of Abraham; and whoso enters it, is peace. And Pilgrimage to the House is a duty which men - those who can find a way thither-owe to Allah (3)."

After rebuilding the Ka'ba Abraham (as) was then commanded to go to Mount Thabir and invite people to come for pilgrimage to this old house. Between the time of Prophet Abraham (as) and the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa), the Ka'ba went through several cycles of rebuilding. Roughly two decades before Prophet Muhammad (sa) migrated to Medina from Mecca, the Ka'ba became susceptible to flooding once again. This time it was rebuilt by a carpenter by the name of Baqum of Egypt who used local stone and teakwood retrieved from the wreckage of a Byzantine ship (2).

From House of One God to House of Pagans

Despite God's commandment to Abraham (as) to purify His House and to call people to it and worship the one and only God, the one without any partners, a time came when the Ka'ba became a House for pagan worship. By the time of the advent of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) the Ka'ba was filled with 360 idols (one for each day of the year). The pagans did continue the ritual of circumambulation but their mode of worship included chanting, whistling, and dancing around the Ka'ba. It was at the time of the fall of Mecca in the year 630 that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) cleared the Ka'ba of its idols. As he went around destroying the idols he recited, "Truth has

come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish away fast (4)."

In 570 CE Abraha, the Christian viceroy of Abyssinia, came with an army to attack the Ka'ba. They wanted their local Church in San'a to be a greater attraction than the Ka'ba. This incident is recorded in the Holy Qur'an. The army had several elephants, hence the name of the chapter is titled, Al-Fil- the Elephant. The Meccan chiefs, including Abd al-Muttalib, grandfather of the Holy Prophet (sa), tried to negotiate with Abraha without success. By Divine intervention his army was struck with smallpox and destroyed without reaching the battlefield (5).

After that point and ever since, the Ka'ba was restored as a place of pilgrimage for Muslims who believe in One God.

The "Black Stone" (Hajar al-Aswad)

The "Black Stone" or the Hajar al-Aswad is located in the eastern cornerstone of the Ka'ba. Sources tell us that this stone is of meteoritic origin. It is an oval shaped stone which includes red and yellow colored minerals. There have been many stories woven around the nature of the Black Stone and its origin. Nevertheless, the significance of the stone lies in the fact that during the pilgrimage the Holy Prophet (sa) kissed it. Caliph Umar (ra) said, 'I know this is only a stone no different from other similar stones, and were it not the memory that the Holy Prophet (sa) expressed his gratitude to God for His favors and bounties by kissing it, I would pay no attention to it.' Thus, to follow in the footsteps of this tradition the pilgrims attempt to kiss, touch, or point to it.



Qiblah

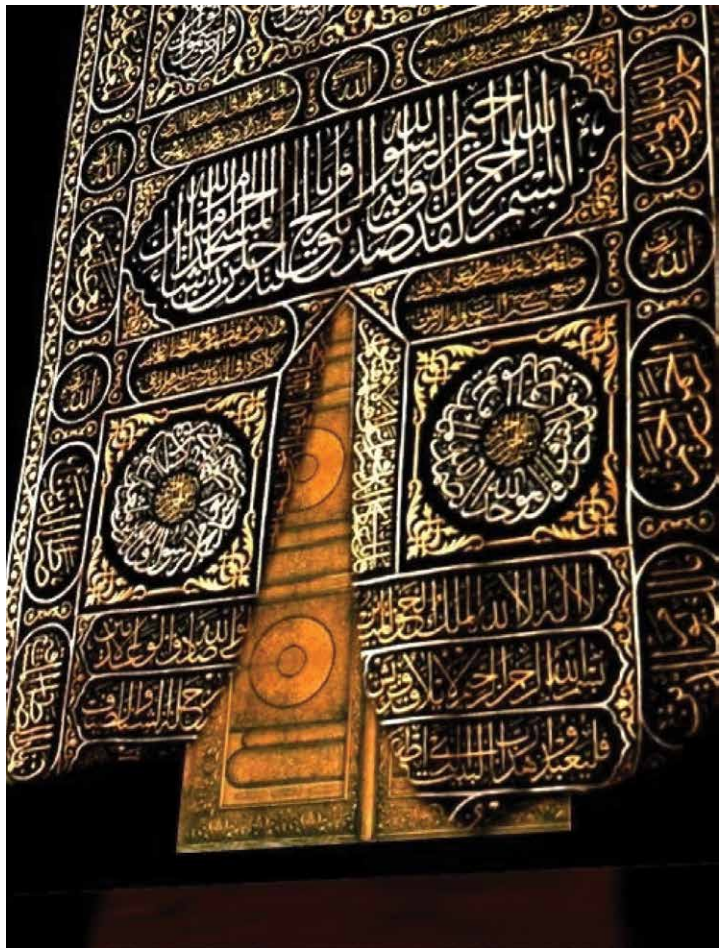
According to Encyclopedia Britannica, "During Muhammad's (sa) early ministry, the Ka'ba was the Qiblah, or direction of Prayer, for the Muslim community. After the Muslim migration, or Hijrah, to Madinah, the Qibla briefly switched to Jerusalem before returning to the Ka'ba (6)."

While leading the daily Prayer in the mosque of the Banu Salimah in Madinah, the Holy Prophet (sa) was commanded by God to change the direction from Jerusalem to Mecca, and his congregation followed this change of direction in the middle of the Prayer.

The Qur'an describes this incident as follows: "Indeed, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qibla which thou likest. So turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you are, turn your faces towards it (7)."

Kiswah

The Ka'ba itself has been covered by a cloth with Arabic inscriptions for many centuries. This cloth is known as the Kiswah.



Rashida Hargey in her article 'Ka'ba-House of Allah' writes:

"The first historically verifiable record of the draping of the Ka'ba attributes the honor to Tabu Karab Aswad, King of Humayyur in Yemen. Tabu invaded Yathrib (now Madinah) in 400 C.E., 220 years before the Hijra. He also entered Mecca and performed Umrah. He is said to have dreamt that he was making a covering and then dressed

the Ka'ba with this Kasaf made of dried palm leaves sewn together. In one form or another, the Kiswah has draped the Ka'ba ever since (8)."

Fazal Ahmad in 'The History of the Ka'ba' writes,

"What may be more surprising is that the "Kiswah was at various times made of red and then green cloth. It was not until the time of Khalifa al-Nasir Al-Abbasi (1180 - 1225) that the color of the cloth was changed to black, and it has remained black ever since. The Kiswah is changed every year, and the old cloth is cut into pieces and distributed among various institutions and to pilgrims as a souvenir of their visit (2)."

Present Description and Facts about Ka'ba

"The cube-shaped structure is roughly 50 feet (15 meters) high, and it is about 35 by 40 feet (10 by 14 meters) at its base. Constructed of gray stone and marble, it is oriented so that its corners roughly correspond to the points of the compass. The interior contains three pillars supporting the roof and a number of suspended silver and gold lamps (6)."

A semicircular enclosure on one side with 1 meter high wall is called Hatim, also known as Hijr Ismail (as). A 3 meter portion of this enclosure used to be part of the main Ka'ba structure but during one of the reconstructions it was excluded due to lack of legitimate funds (2).

(i) The interior is now lined with marble and a green cloth covering the upper walls. Fixed into the walls are plaques each commemorating the refurbishment or rebuilding of the House of Allah by the ruler of the day

(ii) The original Ka'ba used to have a door for entrance and another for exit. For a considerable period of time it also had a window situated to one side.

(iii) Keys in the hands of one family: On the conquest of Mecca, the Prophet (sa) was given the keys to the Ka'ba and he returned them back to Osman ibn Talha of the Bani Shaiba family and said "Take it, O Bani Talha, eternally up to the Day of Resurrection, and it will not be taken from you unless by an unjust oppressive tyrant."

(iv) Until recently, the Ka'ba was opened twice a week for anyone to enter and pray. However, due to the rapid expansion in the number of pilgrims and other factors, Ka'ba is now opened only twice a year for dignitaries and exclusive guests (9)."

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Masjid-e-Nabawi - The Holy Prophet's Mosque

Seher Bhatti

Introduction

The Holy Prophet Muhammad's (sa) Mosque at Medina started out as a humble structure, built by himself along with his fellow companions after the migration (Hijra) from Mecca. Located in Saudi Arabia where its square footage is believed to cover most of the original version of Medina that existed 1400 years ago, Masjid-e-Nabawi is a torch for pilgrims everywhere. It stands as one of the largest mosques ever built and was the third mosque built in the history of Islam- the first being the Ka'aba.

It was 622 AD when the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) settled in Medina after his Hijra from Mecca. His initial arrival into the city was a huge relief for the Muslims already living there, knowing the dangers and the enemies that had intent to thwart the Holy Prophet's (sa) journey after evading the Meccan Chiefs and their plot to kill him. Indeed it was humiliating for the Meccans, but a victory for the Muslims. The people of Medina were so excited to see him as he rode in with Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra), the first caliph and a close friend of Prophet Muhammad (sa), they crowded around and began to lead his camel, but Prophet Muhammad (sa) instructed to leave the creature be, since Allah was guiding it to a special spot. This would inevitably become the spot where Masjid-e-Nabawi, the first mosque in Medina, would be built. Two orphans by the name of Sahal and Suhayl had initially owned the land, which Prophet Muhammad (sa) had purchased from them, refusing to accept it as a gift.

Upon completion the mosque measured 100 feet by 116.9 feet and at a height of 11.8 feet. It was an open air building which meant there was no solid roof. The roof was supported by palm trunks and made of beaten clay and palm leaves. It only covered a portion of the mosque to shield the attendees from the sun. The mosque had three doors: Bab-al-Rahmah (The Door of Mercy) was to the south, Bab-al-Jibril (Door of Gabriel) was to the west and Babal-Nisa (Door of the Women) was to the east. It was a structure that also served as a community center, a court, and a religious school.

At the time of migration he was only married to two wives, Hazrat Aisha (ra) and Hazrat Sauda (ra). So at the construction of Masjid-e-Nabawi there were two houses in the complex of the building to begin with, and then the rest



were built as he married more women. Only Hazrat Aisha's (ra) house was attached to the mosque where the Holy Prophet (sa) could gain direct entrance inside.

Changing of the Qiblah

Initially the Prophet (sa) was told to pray towards Jerusalem (Baitul Maqdis). This was a practice he had done even in Mecca his entire life. In Mecca every time Prophet Muhammad (sa) would pray he would situate himself so that the Ka'aba was in front of him and Baitul Maqdis was in that direction, so it was as if he wanted to pray facing the Ka'abah. Baitul Maqdis was considered the most holy land on earth at the time. The Jews and after that the Christians

made it their central point of worship, and so it was popularly known as a blessed point of worship. When Masjid-e-Nabawi was built the Qiblah was indeed directed at Jerusalem, however, Prophet Muhammad (sa) desired to face the Ka'abah when he prayed. Although a deep desire it was, he never prayed for it out of respect for God's command, yet he would constantly look to the skies in eagerness. He did have a kind of intuition that one day they would be commanded to face the Ka'aba and indeed that rang true with the following verse:

"Verily, We see thee turning thy face often to heaven; surely, then, will We make thee turn to the Qiblah which thou likest. So, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it. And they to whom the Book has been given know that this is the truth from their Lord; and Allah is not unmindful of what they do (1)."

Thus, God tells us here in this verse that He will grant his servant's wish.

Changes to the mosque

The mosque also underwent some reconstruction at first under Hazrat Usman's orders in 649. In 707 Umayyad caliph Al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malik renovated it, which took three years. A wall was erected to keep the mosque and the houses of the wives of Prophet Muhammad (sa) segregated. The mosque was again rebuilt in a trapezoid shape. The reason for this is thought to be that they didn't want people thinking there were two Ka'abas, and that they didn't want anyone praying to the tomb. Four minarets were built around the structure, which was a first for Medina. Over the years it continued to be updated with the addition of the dome that

came during the rule of the Mamluk Sultans in 1279 CE. It went through a series of colors before it was settled on the green dome that can be seen today.

More than 200 years later a fire destroyed most of the mosque including the wooden dome, which was over the Holy Prophet's (sa) grave. The Sultan of Egypt (1468–1496ce) was a great patron of architectural buildings, and rebuilt the east, west and Qiblah (south) walls. Sultan Qa'itbay also replaced most of the wooden base of the dome with brick structure so that it wouldn't fall apart in future. Lead plates were used to cover the new wooden dome, which indeed allow for the dome to stay intact for many centuries.

Today millions of people flock to the structure of Masjid-e-Nabawi. The green dome that can be seen from far away is where the tomb of the Prophet is. There are several walls that separate the tomb, although no one goes inside to see the actual grave. The last time a person had seen it was one thousand years ago. The mosque itself is very big and is constantly being kept clean. It continues to attract pilgrims from the world over.

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The Quba Mosque: Islam's First Mosque

Khalida Jamilah

On the night of the Paris terror attacks, former US Marine, Ted Hakey Jr, took a high-powered rifle and fired 30 shots at Baitul Aman Mosque in Connecticut. Nearly nine months later, he has gone from being an extreme hater of Islam to being a staunch Muslim ally. He has apologized to the members of the Meriden Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Its members have embraced him as a brother.(1) Hakey is a living example of non-Muslim misconception about mosques. Due to the rise of Islamophobia, a mosque is often assumed to be a place of potential radicalization. This is borne out by preliminary data from the Council on American-Islamic Relations stating that 78 mosques were attacked in 2015.(2)

A great many people object to mosques, viewing them as a hub for extremism. However, Islam's first mosque, the Quba Mosque, is not a place for radicalization, rather, it serves as a place of peace and piety for worship because that, of course, is the true purpose of a mosque.

I shall present first a brief historical background about the city of Medina and its inhabitants, to lay the groundwork, as it were, for the Prophet Muhammad (sa) building of the Quba Mosque. Prior to the migration of the Holy Prophet (sa), Medina was known as Yathrib. However, after his migration, people began referring to it as Medinatur Rasul i.e. the City of God's Messenger.(3) Thereafter, it became known gradually as simply 'Medina', an ancient city situated close to the desert-trade route which runs from Mecca towards Syria. The Holy Prophet (sa) had to leave his beloved homeland, Mecca, because its inhabitants rejected the message of Islam, namely, to worship One God. Not only did they reject the Prophet's (sa) message, they also persecuted him mercilessly, until a Divine command instructed him to migrate to Medina. The Meccans were mostly idol-worshippers and they lived in a state of ignorance. They would waste their time in gambling, drinking, in the subjugation of women as objects, and in the heartless murder of their own daughters because females were considered to be inferior in every way.

Conditions in the City of Medina

At the time of the Prophet's migration, the population of Medina was scattered. According to ancient records, the 'Amaliq were the first people to inhabit Medina. The Jews



gradually expelled the 'Amaliq and took up residence there. These Jews were divided into three tribes: the Banu Qainuqa', the Banu Nadir, and the Banu Quraizah. In the beginning, these three tribes lived together in great harmony and unity. It was at this time that two tribes from the Banu Qahtan, the Aus and the Khazraj, emigrated from Yemen to settle in Medina. The Aus and Khazraj were mostly uneducated idol-worshippers. They were deeply impressed by the more educated and civilized Jews, so much so, that whenever an individual from the Aus or the Khazraj could not produce a male child, he would vow that if a son was born to him, he would make him a Jew. As such, many people 'became' Jews in this manner, and they grew increasingly strong. Vanity and arrogance over their power propelled the Jews to inflict an array of cruelties upon the Aus and the Khazraj, after which, relations deteriorated rapidly between the two sides.(4)

Eventually, the Aus and the Khazraj tribes felt frustrated enough that they killed the most prominent Jewish leaders, after which the Jews lost their strength, and the Aus and Khazraj attained supremacy in the city. However, another outcome which slowly but surely began to manifest itself was that the Aus and the Khazraj, who, until then had lived together in peace and harmony due to their opposition of the Jews, now began to fight amongst themselves as well. Ultimately, these civil wars took on such a vast and horrific significance that both tribes became very weak on account of being relentlessly slaughtered at the hands of one another. In this manner, the entire city became engulfed in a dreadful civil war.(5)

The civil strife finally ended around the time when the Holy Prophet (sa) made his claim to Prophethood in Mecca. Eventually, after still further intrigue, Islam would raise some from among these ever-warring tribes from the depths of a dark abyss of disgrace to a brilliant summit of prosperity.

The Prophet's (sa) Arrival at Quba(6)

The Holy Prophet (sa) arrived at Quba on September 20th, 622 AD. After meeting with the elated people of the reception party, he did not enter the city of Medina directly. Instead he entered from an elevated habitation named Quba, which was situated 2 to 3 miles north of Medina. The Holy Prophet (sa) visited Quba to meet with some Muslims who had arrived there from Mecca before him, the Muhajirin, (emigrants), as well as the Ansar (helpers) of Quba. It is related that when the Holy Prophet (sa) arrived, the atmosphere in Medina was as if a light illuminated the whole city; when the Holy Prophet (sa) passed away, Medina never seemed darker.

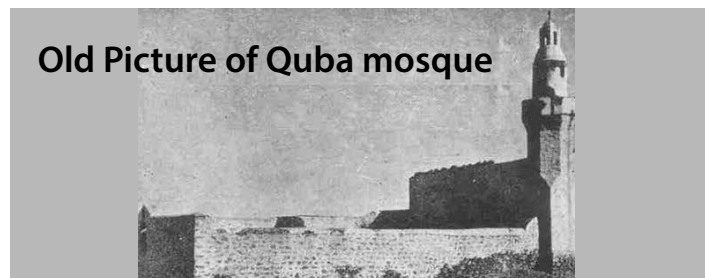
According to historians, the first task executed by the Holy Prophet (sa) upon arrival was to erect a mosque in Quba. He laid the first foundation stone of this mosque with his own hands. His Companions (ra) worked together as laborers and builders and after a few days of concentrated effort, the mosque was complete. The Holy Prophet (sa) had great love for this mosque until the end of his life. Even after taking up residence in Medina, the Holy Prophet (sa) would visit Quba every week and offer Salat in this mosque. Full establishment of the weekly Friday prayer service, Salat al Jumu'ah, took place during this time period. Various scholars believe that this mosque at Quba is the one which is referred to in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an "...A mosque which was founded upon piety from the very first day..."(7) Hence it is also known as Masjid-e Taqwa. This reference shows that the Holy Prophet's (sa) building of the Quba Mosque is living proof that, despite intense persecution from the enemy of Islam in Mecca, God commanded

the Holy Prophet (sa) to lay the foundation of a mosque with his own hand. Thus this mosque served as a source of peace and piety for the residents of Quba and Medina. There is no doubt that Muslims had erected various mosques prior to this as well. However, the mosque at Quba was indeed the first mosque in Islam, the foundation of which was laid at the hands of the Holy Prophet (sa), on the first day in the first year after the completion of the migration. Muslims built this mosque as a national place of worship.

During the era of the Holy Prophet (sa) and his Successors, there was no distinction between the patrons of mosques because at that time there was no centralized government in the area. Mosques were built by various patrons such as the State or some institutions, by rural or village communities, and by individuals.

A mosque where the patron is the State simply refers to whomever is responsible for the funding of the mosque, to its maintenance and supervision. Generally, this applies only to a country with Islam as system of governance, or a country with a high percentage of Muslim inhabitants, including where the majority of the government staff is Muslim. An example of this is the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, Indonesia. A mosque built by a government is a symbol of an Islamic nation. Mosques built by institutions assume symbolic importance in signaling the centrality of Islam in the institutions. The Salman Mosque in Bandung Institute of Technology, Indonesia, is a good example of this. This mosque symbolizes the large presence of Muslim students in that university, although the university itself is a secular one. However, they were able to build a mosque through the generosity of a major donor. Mosques in rural or village communities usually have a chief or a wealthy leader of the community as their patron and donor. This type of mosque creates a sense of togetherness in the community because its members take part in the planning of the mosque, then contentedly go on to become its regular congregation. Generally, individual patrons build a mosque as a sign of their piety, or as a contribution toward their own community. Certain rulers, or those with great wealth, often build a mosque in a foreign land as a reminder of their presence and of their faith. For example, several Saudi Arabian princesses have built mosques in Pakistan, Morocco and Spain.(8)

Old Picture of Quba mosque



Let us turn now to the detail of the Quba Mosque's architectural design.(9)

The Site

The original mosque has been rebuilt and renovated on several occasions through the ages to the present time.

The Design

The development of the design for the new extension of the Quba Mosque was a complex process. In the first place there was the existing structure, which went back over 150 years, and to which minor alterations and extensions were made as recently as 1967. This was a factor to be cautiously considered. A complete survey and an evaluation of the existing building was undertaken and a study of the possibility of its restoration and renovation was considered. Secondly, there were the new requirements for the renovated building. A number of technical problems were raised due to the needs of contemporary usage. Thirdly, there was a major problem imposed by the restrictions to which the new extension could be constructed: A burial ground overruled further extension to the east, while roads and properties limited spreading in other directions. The old structure was showing major cracks in the domes and arches. Apart from those, the minarets seemed to be the only element worthy of preservation. The main scheme considered for the new design was that of preserving the character of the old building by recreating a similar architectural form.

The new Quba Mosque is designed to accommodate ten thousand people for prayer and is more than five times the size of the previous mosque. The mosque is expected to be used in its full capacity only during the Pilgrimage (Hajj) season when, every year, more than two million Muslims from all over the world will visit it for prayers. During the rest of the year, the front prayer hall with its six major domes will provide ample space for everyday prayer and for Friday prayers. The spaces within the prayer halls have been articulated accordingly to meet with the varying size of the congregation.

The courtyard will provide proper ventilation to the mosque and is to be equipped with a retractable, lightweight, shading membrane controlled by electric motors. Its technical design has been created in Germany by Dr. Mahmoud Rasch in collaboration with Professor Frei Otto. The tent membrane will function during extremely hot periods of the year and mainly at midday prayer sessions. The alternative of roofing the courtyard with a fixed structure was strongly rejected because the concept of bringing the spaciousness of the sky into the volume of the mosque

was of major importance to the design.

The amenities of the mosque have been placed on the remaining north eastern terrain. Six row houses with back gardens are separated by a narrowly accessed lane from the shops and ablution areas. The library and offices have been placed above the shops and are reached by a staircase leveled with landscape terraces. The whole complex is connected to the mosque by an elevated walkway. Behind this walkway is a ramp for the use of the aged, which then winds to the women's prayer mezzanine. Very close attention to the design of these areas was essential in order not to overwhelm the overall effect of the mosque complex.

Construction Materials

The foundation and the sub-basement of the mosque were built of re-enforced concrete, while all walls, domes and vaults were of load-bearing bricks masonry. Brick as a construction material was crucial to the design and has provided an incredible coolness within the interior through its thermal mass insulation characteristics.



Lessons from the Quba Mosque

Narrating the in-depth history of the Quba Mosque in 1800 words is an injustice because the mosque has many more interesting facts to be covered. In this limited space, the Quba Mosque is proof that Islam is not a violent religion, nor did the Holy Prophet (sa) have any ill-minded ambition to create an Islamic State and to gain political territory. If he desired, he could have waged war against the Meccans who persecuted him intensely. However, historical facts and authentic narration of his life prove that he only declared war in self-defense, or when the war disturbed religious freedom. Thus, the Quba Mosque is a symbol for jihad- not the kind of jihad practiced by misinformed, so-called Muslims, which is to murder non-Muslims and Muslims alike- but the true jihad which was always practiced by the Holy Prophet (sa) and his followers. It started from terrible trials but with persistent faith in Divine help, by virtue of which he overcame those life-threatening trials and shared the message of Islam with the people of Medina.

Similar to other Houses of God, a mosque is a place for prayer in which an individual can contemplate his or her own faith level and strive to attain the highest level. For Muslim readers, the increasing incidents of attacks on mosques may instill fear of being a Muslim in a non - Muslim country. There can develop a mind-set of being the 'others' or 'my religion does not fit in

with their culture.' Do not become fearful through mental persecution! Enemies no longer attack Islam with the sword: they use false propaganda and grossly ignorant people to strengthen Islamophobia. The best remedy for this social disease of prejudice and hate is to come to a mosque with a sincere heart and mind. Pray in congregation for world peace and for the leaders of this nation to do absolute justice. Invite neighbors to learn about tolerance and engage in interfaith dialogue. A mosque whose leader teaches extremism and hate does not represent the true purpose of the mosque because true Islam never teaches Muslims to murder non-Muslims. The Holy Qur'an states: "Whosoever kills a person... it shall be as if he killed all mankind; and whoso gives life to one is as if he had given life to all mankind." (10)

There is no need to fear a mosque, nor to fear a Muslim who practices true Islam. Be like Ted Hakey, Jr. who shot into the wall of a mosque, yet, the congregation of that mosque did not build a 'wall' against him; he came to understand how misinformed he had been because, instead of a wall, they built a bridge: a bridge of forgiveness and friendship starting within their own mosque, which, like the Quba Mosque, is the best place for piety and peace.

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The Dome of the Rock

Bushra Bajwa

At the highest point in Old Jerusalem, stands the magnificent Dome of the Rock. Its striking blue exterior and its golden dome, glistening in the Jerusalem sun, make it an emblematic architectural landmark that boasts perfection in both beauty and design. Yet differences in religious beliefs, ownership and politics have encased this masterpiece over the centuries and continue to do so to this day.

History

The Dome of the Rock is situated on top of a hill; a hill that's name is disputed amongst the people of Jerusalem. Temple Mount, as the Jewish community refers to it, is called Haram al Sharif by the Muslims, meaning the Noble Sanctuary. This area of 35 acres, situated in the southwest corner of the old city of Jerusalem, is probably the most contested piece of land in the world.

The Jews believe that Temple Mount was the location of the First and Second Temples. The First Temple was built by King Solomon in 950 BC and was destroyed by the Babylonians 370 years later. And the Second Jewish Temple was built around 20 BC by Herod the Great, and later destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. In Jewish theology, it is believed that the Second Temple will be replaced by a future Third Temple.

The Arabs conquered Jerusalem in 638 AD under the caliphate of Omar. The Caliph Omar, visited and prayed at Haram al Sharif that year. A few decades later, Umayyad Caliphs commissioned the construction of The Dome of the Rock and the Al Aqsa Mosque (the third most significant site in Islam for Sunni Muslims) at the Mount. The Dome of the Rock was built by the Umayyad Caliph Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan. Its construction started in 689 and was completed by 691.

The Crusaders seized Jerusalem in 1099 and turned the Dome of the Rock into a church, adding a cross to its dome. The Crusaders were driven out from Jerusalem in 1187 by Saladin and the cross on top of the Dome was replaced by a crescent.

Since the Crusades, Haram al-Sharif has been managed by the Muslims. And in 1967, despite Israel occupying the old city and East Jerusalem, the holy site itself was adminis-



tered by a Jordanian Waqf – an Islamic trust, and continues to do so today. Until the mid-twentieth century, non-Muslims were not allowed in the area but an agreement was reached in 1967 whereby non-Muslims are permitted to visit the area, but not pray there. The site remains a major focal point of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Religious Significance

The Dome of the Rock is not a mosque as is often assumed. Its original purpose has been debated over the years. Some earlier historians argued that Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock to relocate the location of the Muslim pilgrimage (Hajj) from the Ka'ba, in Mecca to Jerusalem to challenge the rebel Ibn al-Zubayr who then controlled Mecca. However, there was little evidence to support this argument, as Mecca remained the destination of the Hajj throughout Ibn al-Zubayr's revolt.

Some scholars argue that Abd al-Malik built the Dome of the Rock to demonstrate the supremacy of the religion of Islam, especially over Christianity. Outstanding in its magnitude and embellishment, it is argued that the Dome of the Rock was built to rival Christian houses of worship in Jerusalem, in particular the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Inside the Dome are inscriptions of verses of the Quran, which denounce the Christian beliefs of the divinity of Jesus and the Trinity, and stress the Islamic concept of the unity of God and that Jesus was a prophet.

But the most widely accepted purpose for the construction of the Dome of the Rock is that it was built to enshrine the sacred rock. The rock, known as the Foundation Stone, over which the shrine is built, is sacred to the Muslim and Judeo-Christian faiths. According to Jewish and Christian traditions, it is believed that here, Abraham (as) prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac (as). Whereas in Islam, it is believed that it was not his son Isaac (as), but his son, Ismael (as). "My Lord, grant me a righteous son. So We gave him the glad tidings of a forbearing son. And when he was old enough to work with him, he said, 'O my dear son, I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering thee. So consider, what thou thinkest of it!' He replied, 'O my father, do as thou art commanded; thou wilt find me, if Allah please, of those who are patient' (1). Ismael (as) was Abraham's (as) eldest son – and thus the righteous son he had prayed for. Therefore he was the one Abraham (as) set out to sacrifice.



Also, mainstream Muslims believe that Foundation Stone was the rock from which Prophet Muhammad (sa) made al-Isra, the Night Journey, and ascended to heaven and saw Allah. However, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community opposes this claim arguing that since the Prophet (sa) was sleeping, the ascension could only be spiritual, and not physical. What's more, if the Holy Prophet (sa) had ascended physically, he would have seen God with his physical eyes. But the Holy Qur`ān and Hadīth mention that he saw God through his heart, "The heart of the Prophet lied not in seeing what he saw" (2). And Hadhrat Aisha (ra) says that "Whosoever thinks that Prophet Muhammad (sa) saw his Lord, he surely attributed a great lie on God.... Haven't you heard that Allah says that the eyes do not reach him but He reaches the eyes" (3).

The Foundation Stone and its surroundings are the holiest place for Jews and thus they face towards this direction when they pray. Muslims also initially faced Haram Al-Sharif when praying in the earlier years of Islam from 610 to 623. But a year and a half after migrating to Medina,

Prophet Muhammad (sa), was facing Jerusalem whilst praying when he received revelation from God to change the direction of the Qibla, towards the Ka'ba in Mecca, "So, turn thy face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you be, turn your faces towards it" (4). Prophet Muhammad (sa) immediately turned around to face Mecca and so did the followers praying behind him.

"So, turn thy face
towards the
Sacred Mosque;
and wherever you be,
turn your faces
towards it"

(2:145)

Design

The Dome of the Rock is an outstanding architectural landmark. Its striking color combination, abundance of geometric patterns and absence of human and animal representation make it an exclusive piece of its time.

The shrine conveys a unique message through color and shape. It is believed that the gold dome represents the color of God's knowledge. The blue, like the color of the sky, suggests infinity. And the shape of the dome is a symbol of the ascent to heaven as well as the wholeness essential to Islamic faith.

The design of the Dome of the Rock is a masterpiece of Byzantine architecture. The mathematical rhythm of its proportions contribute to its astounding visual impact. For example, each outer wall is 67 feet long, which is exactly the dome's diameter and exactly its height from the base of the drum. The same principles were used in Byzantine churches of Italy, Syria, and Palestine, although not to this extraordinary effect. And the octagonal plan of the structure may also have been influenced by the Byzantine Church of the Seat of Mary, which lies on the road between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The lessons learned

from the architectural design of the Dome of the Rock have been used by Muslims in the development of many other Islamic buildings. The idea of a circular dome on a high drum has become the hallmark of Islamic houses of worship.

The Dome of the Rock is still standing in much of its original shape and a good portion of its original decoration. Yet over the course of many centuries, it has been altered in form and function, by different groups that conquered Jerusalem, and has undergone successive restoration projects. The exterior mosaics that once adorned the Dome of the Rock suffered from exposure to Jerusalem winters. They were repaired and then completely replaced with tiles by Suleman (Solomon) the Magnificent in 1545 and again in the last major restoration in 1956-62 following damage caused by an earthquake in 1927.

The great golden dome that crowns the Dome of the Rock was originally made of gold, but was replaced with copper and then aluminum made in Italy. The aluminum is now covered with gold leaf, a donation of \$8.2 million from the late King Hussein of Jordan in 1994.

The Dome of the Rock is a living monument of the many cultures and historical events that have shaped it. Whilst the architectural and ornate features of this work of art are heavily indebted to the Byzantine Christian artistic tradition, the Quranic inscriptions embellishing the Dome of the Rock propagate the virtues of the Islamic faith over Christianity, thus creating a majestic overall effect.



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- 3 Muslim Kitab-ul-Iman
- 4 Quran 2:145

Solomon's Temple, Jerusalem

Zia H. Shah MD



Artist's interpretation of the first Temple in Jerusalem

"Christians and Muslims in the Middle Ages believed the Dome of the Rock to be the Temple of Solomon (Templum Domini)." The Encyclopedia Britannica states, "The Knights Templar was quartered there following the conquest of Jerusalem by a Crusader army in 1099, and Templar churches in Europe imitated its design. The Dome was used as church until a Muslim army recaptured Jerusalem in 1187"(1).

But, the Second Temple that was built in place of Solomon's Temple had been destroyed in 70 CE by the Romans. When Caliph Umar Farooq took over Jerusalem in the seventh century, the Temple Mount, the 35 acre raised platform, on which the Dome of the Rock sits today, was the garbage dump for the city and there were no Jews living in Jerusalem. They had been banished from the city by the Roman kings in the previous centuries.

During the tenth century BCE, king or the prophet David had completed several construction works in Jerusalem, as befitted a king. He had built himself a palace of cedar wood brought from Lebanon. He had also built the Tower of David, a new citadel. To accommodate the growing number of civil servants, craftsmen, and soldiers that his expanding empire required, he had enlarged the city.

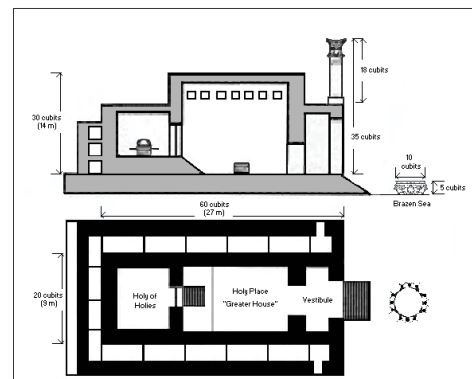
But just as Moses, who had led the people out of Egypt, had died on the threshold of the Promised Land, David had led the people of Yahweh into Jerusalem but failed to build a temple for his God. Nevertheless, he had at least been able to prepare the ground by purchasing the land for the

Temple from Araunah, who may have been the last Jebusite king (2).

The only source of information on the First Temple is the Hebrew Bible(3). According to the biblical sources, the Temple was constructed under Solomon, during the united monarchy of Israel and Judah. The Bible describes a Hiram I of Tyre who furnished architects, workmen and cedar timbers for the Temple of his ally Solomon at Jerusalem. He also cooperated with Solomon in mounting an expedition on the Red Sea. 1 Kings 6:1 puts the date of the beginning of building the temple "in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel." The conventional dates of Solomon's reign are 970 to 931 BCE. This puts the date of its construction in the mid-10th century BCE (4).

1 Kings 9:10 says that it took Solomon twenty years altogether to build the Temple and his royal palace. The Temple itself finished being built after seven years (5). During the united monarchy the Temple was dedicated to Yahweh, the God of Israel, and housed the Ark of the Covenant, containing the original tablets of the Ten Commandments (6). Rabbinic sources state that the First Temple stood for 410 years, and based on the second century work Seder Olam Rabbah, place construction in 832 BCE and destruction in 422 BCE, 165 years later than secular estimates (7,8).

The exact location of the Temple is unknown. It is believed to have been situated upon the hill which forms the site of the first century Second Temple and present-day Temple Mount, where the Dome of the Rock is situated.



Plan of Solomon's Temple with measurements

The most important highlight of the Temple was the Holy of Holies (9). The Holy of Holies was also called the "Inner House" and was twenty cubits in length, breadth, and height (10).

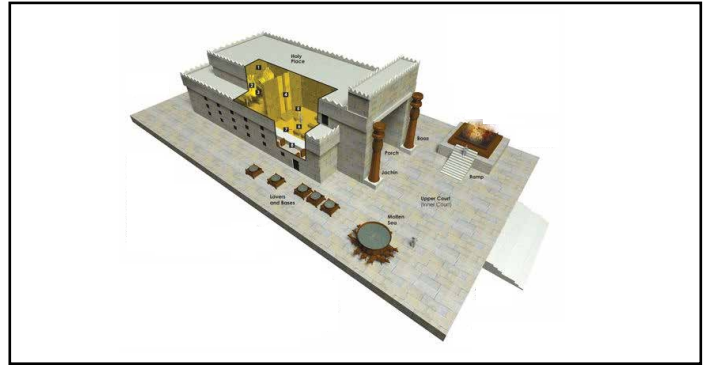
It contained two cherubim or statues of angels made of olive-wood, each ten cubits high and each having outspread wings of ten cubits span, so that, since they stood side by side, the wings touched the wall on either side and met in the center of the room (11). It had no windows and was considered the dwelling-place of the "name" of God (12). The Holy of Holies was prepared to receive and house the Ark (13); and when the Temple was dedicated, the Ark was placed therein (14).

"Once the Ark was installed there," according to Karen Armstrong, "the site became for the Israelites a 'center' that linked heaven and earth and also had its roots in the underworld, represented by the primal sea. Like the Sacred Mountain, the Temple was a symbol of the reality that sustains the life of the cosmos. Like Jacob's ladder, it represented a bridge to the source of being, without which the fragile mundane world could not subsist (15)". When the priests emerged from the holy place after placing the Ark there, the Temple was filled with a cloud, "for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord," an affirmation of God's approval of the project (16).



In an artistic representation, King Solomon dedicates the Temple at Jerusalem (painting by James Tissot or follower, c. 1896–1902)

Karen Armstrong, in her book, *Jerusalem: One City Three Faiths*, explains that once the Temple was built it was meant to be an experience of God for all the Jewish people, like the Muslims experience the Transcendent God of Abrahamic faiths, who is beyond time, space and matter, by going to the Ka'aba or the Dome of the Rock and the Christians experience by going to the Church of Holy Sepulcher or the Church of Holy Nativity. She writes: "The Temple built by Solomon on Mount Zion gave pilgrims and worshippers an experience of God. In the following chapter, we will see that many of them hoped to



have a Vision of Yahweh there. Instead of being cast adrift in the world, like the builders of Babel, many of them felt that they had come home when they entered Yahweh's Temple. As a symbol of the sacred, the Temple was also the source of the world's fertility and order. But, as in the other countries of the Near East, its great sanctity was inseparable from the pursuit of what we would today call 'social justice.' This is an important point. Now that they had a monarchy of their own, the people of Israel and Judah naturally adopted the local ideal of sacral kingship. The king was Yahweh's mashiach, his 'anointed one.' On the day of his coronation on Zion, God's 'holy mountain,' God adopted him as his son. His palace was next to the Temple, and his throne of judgment was beside Yahweh's throne in the Devir. His task was to impose the rule of God and to ensure that God's own justice prevailed in the land. The psalms tell us that the king had to 'defend the poorest, save the children of those in need, and crush their oppressors.' If this justice prevailed, there would be peace, harmony, and fertility in the kingdom. Yahweh would provide them with the security which was so earnestly and continually sought for in the ancient world: because Zion was now Yahweh's heritage, it was, therefore, 'God-protected forever.' But there could be no security and no shalom if there was no justice in Zion (17).

These are not some poetic exaggerations by Karen Armstrong. Helping the weak and oppressed and justice were the central themes of the Jewish prophets. A quick reading of Isaiah 58:1-12 in the Hebrew Bible, should substantiate all these claims.

Karen Armstrong further writes about the ideals of Judaism that are fundamental to the integrity of the Temple of Solomon:

"The ideal is expressed in three words which recur constantly in the Jerusalem psalms: mishpat, tzedek, and shalom. The word mishpat is a legal term meaning 'judgment' or 'verdict,' but it also denotes the harmonious rule of Yahweh on Mount Zion. When the Ark of the Covenant was carried into the Devir, Yahweh was enthroned on his

holy mountain and he was henceforth the real King of Jerusalem, the earthly king being merely his human representative. The human king's task was to impose tzedek. In Canaan, tzedek (justice, righteousness) was an attribute of the sun god, who brought hidden crimes to light, righted the wrongs done to the innocent, and watched over the world as a judge. Once Yahweh had been enthroned on Zion, tzedek became his attribute too: he would see that justice was done in his kingdom, that the poor and vulnerable were protected, and that the strong did not oppress the weak. Only then would Zion become a city of shalom, a word that is usually translated as 'peace,' but has as its root meaning of 'wholeness,' 'completeness' – that sense of wholeness and completeness which people sought in their holy places. Hence shalom includes all manner of well-being: fertility, harmony, and success in war. The experience of shalom negated the anomie and alienation that is the cause of so much human distress on earth. It was, as we have seen, also a sense of the peace which is God. But Jerusalem could not be a holy city of shalom if there was no tzedek or 'righteousness' in the land. All too often, the people of Israel would forget this. They would concentrate on the holiness and integrity of Jerusalem; they would fight for its purity. But, as the prophets reminded them, if they neglected the pursuit of justice, this would inevitably entail the loss of shalom (18)."

If there is lack of justice and compassion our desire to be close to All Merciful God and personal peace evades us as a distant hope. Peace, justice and compassion are human cravings, but are hard ideals to meet, given that the uncultivated human nature is self centered, egotistic and selfish. The Jewish people could not maintain the high ideals for more than a few generations and as the Jewish prophets had reminded them, if they neglected the pursuit of justice, 'this would inevitably entail the loss of shalom,' which was to be the very foundation of the Temple of Solomon.

Shalom did escape the Temple and according to the Hebrew Bible, the Temple was plundered by the Neo-Babylonian Empire king Nebuchadnezzar II, when the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem during the brief reign of Jehoiachin (19). A decade later, Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem and after thirty months finally breached the city walls in 587 BCE, subsequently burning the Temple, along with most of the city (20).

The Holy Qur'an talks about the destructions of the Temple in 587 BCE and 70 CE. It says:

"So when the time for the first of the two warnings came, We sent against you some servants of Ours possessed of great might in war, and they penetrated the innermost parts of your houses, and it was a warning that was bound to be carried out.

Then We gave you back the power against them, and aided you with wealth and children, and made you larger in numbers.

Now, if you do well, you will do well for your own souls; and if you do evil, it will only go against them. So when the time for the second warning came, We raised a people against you to cover your faces with grief, and to enter the Mosque as they entered it the first time, and to destroy all that they conquered with utter destruction (21)."

Even today Shalom will continue to escape the rebuilding plans of the Third Temple as it is called in Jewish religious aspirations, unless there is justice and compassion. The Holy Qur'an states:

"It may be that your Lord will now have mercy on you; but if you return to your previous state, We too will return with punishment (22)."

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 41,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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House of God of the Orthodox Church

The Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald, Th.D.

The visitor to an Orthodox Church is usually impressed by the unique features and the external differences between this place of worship and those of various traditions of Western Christianity. The rich color, distinctive iconography and beauty of the interior of an Orthodox Church generally are in sharp contrast to the simplicity which one finds in many Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. When one enters the interior of the Orthodox church it is like stepping into a whole new world of color and light. The art and design of the church not only create a distinctive atmosphere of worship, but they also reflect and embody many of the fundamental insights of Orthodoxy.

BEAUTY AND SYMBOLS

The Orthodox Church believes that God is the Creator of heaven and earth. The Creator is present through His creative energies of His handiwork. This means that the material world, being valuable and good, is an important means through which God expresses Himself. The Orthodox Church affirms this conviction through her extensive use of material creation not only for the embellishment of her places of worship, but also in her sacramental mysteries and services. For example, when the bread and wine – “the first fruits of creation” – are offered in the Eucharist, they are also a symbolic offering of all creation to God its Creator. Since there is no hesitation in using the gifts of creation, the interior of an Orthodox church is frequently very beautiful. Designed to create an atmosphere which is special, the building is filled with feeling of joy and an appreciation of God’s bounty. Orthodoxy recognizes that beauty is an important dimension of human life. Through iconography and church appointments, the beauty of creation becomes a very important means of praising God. The divine gifts of the material world are shaped and fashioned by human hands into an expression of beauty which glorifies the Creator. As the pious woman poured her most precious oil on the feet of Our Lord, Orthodoxy seeks always to offer to God what is best and most beautiful.

SACRED SPACE

The interior church is most importantly, both the background and the setting, for Orthodox worship. The art and architecture are designed to contribute to the total experience of worship, which involves one’s intellect, feelings, and



**Russian Orthodox Church, Massachusetts Avenue,
NW, Washington, DC, USA**

senses. The Eucharist and other sacramental mysteries take place in God’s midst, and they bear witness to His presence and actions. Therefore, in the Orthodox tradition there is a very strong feeling that the church is the House of God and place where His glory dwells. For this reason, all Orthodox churches are blessed, consecrated and set aside as sacred space. The whole church bears witness to God’s indwelling among His people. As one old admonition says:

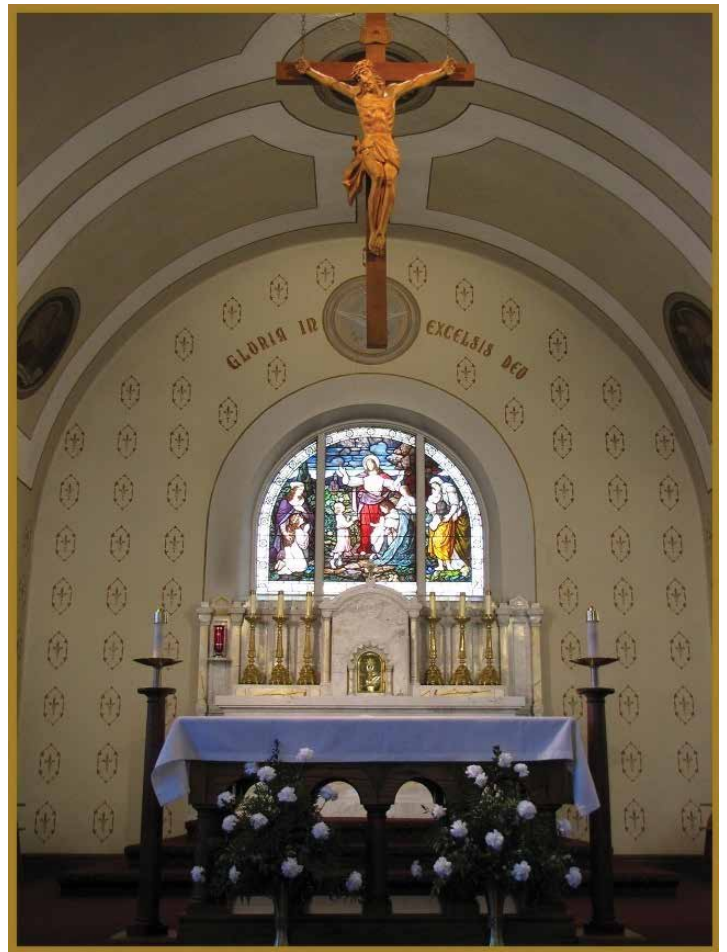
“Let the Christian consider well when he enters the church that he is entering another heaven. That same majesty of God which is in heaven is also in his church, and on this account the Christian must enter with reverence and awe.”

Ideally, an orthodox church is relatively small in order to

emphasize and enhance the sense of community in worship. The church is generally constructed in the form of a cross and divided into three areas: the narthex, the nave, and the sanctuary. The narthex is the entrance area. Centuries ago this area was the place where catechumens (unbaptized learners) and penitents remained during parts of the services. Today, the beginning of the Baptismal service and in some parishes, the Marriage service, begins in the narthex and proceeds into the nave. This procession symbolically represents a gradual movement into the Kingdom of God. In many Orthodox parishes, the narthex is the area where the faithful make an offering, receive a candle, light it before an icon, and offer personal prayer before joining the congregation. The nave is the large center area of the church. Here the faithful gather for worship. Although most Orthodox churches in this country have pews, some follow the old custom of having an open nave with no seats. On the right-hand side of the nave is the bishop's throne from which he presides as living icon of Christ among his people. Even in the bishop's absence, the throne reminds all that the parish is not an isolated entity but is a part of a diocese which the bishop heads. On the left-hand side of the nave is the pulpit from which the Gospel is proclaimed and sermon preached. The choir and cantors frequently occupy areas on the far sides of the nave. The sanctuary is considered the most sacred part of the church, and the area reserved for clergy and their assistant. The sanctuary contains the Holy Alter and is separate from the nave by the Iconostasion. This division serves to remind us that God's reign is not complete and that we often find ourselves 'separated' from God, through sin. However, during the Divine Liturgy, when we have access to the Holy Gifts, we are reminded that, through Christ, heaven and earth are united and that through Him, we have access to the Father. It should be noted that not all services take place within the sanctuary. Many are celebrated in the center of the nave, in the midst of the congregation. In so doing, Orthodoxy emphasizes the fact that worship of the Church is offered by, and for all the people.

THE ALTER

The Alter of Holy Table is the heart and focal point of the Orthodox Church. It is here that Eucharistic gifts of bread and wine are offered to the Father as Christ commanded us to do. The Alter, which is usually square in shape, stands away from the wall and is often covered with cloths. A tabernacle, with reserved Holy Communion for the sick or dying, is set upon the Alter, together with candles. When the Divine Liturgy is not being celebrated, the Book of Gospels rests on the Alter. Behind the Alter is a large cross with painted figure of Christ.



ICONOSTASION

The Iconostasion is the panel of icons which separates the sanctuary from the nave. The Origin of this very distinctive part of an Orthodox church is the ancient custom of placing icons on a low wall before the sanctuary. In time, the icons became fixed on a standing wall, hence the term Iconostasion. In contemporary practice, the Iconostasion may be very elaborate and conceal most of the sanctuary, or it may be very simple and open. The Iconostasion are always the icons of Christ and St. John the Baptist. On the left-hand side are always the icons of the Theotokos (Mother of our Lord) and patron saint or event to which the church is dedicated. In addition to these icons, others may be added, depending upon custom and space.

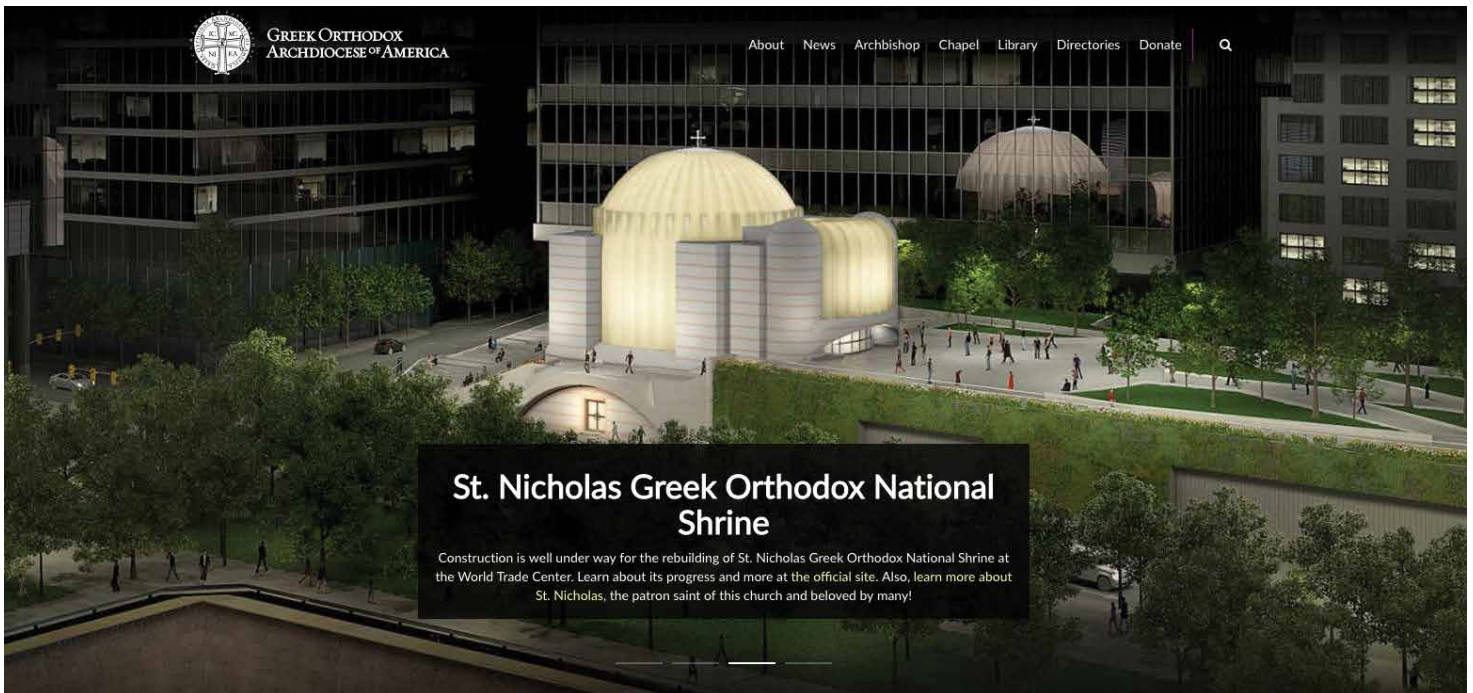
ICONS

An icon is a holy image which is the distinctive art form of the Orthodox Church. In actual practice the icon may be a painting of wood, on canvas, a mosaic or a fresco. Icons depict such figures as Christ, Mary the Theotokos, the saints and angels. They may also portray events from the Scriptures or the history of the Church, such as Christmas, Easter, etc. Icons occupy a very prominent place in Orthodox worship and theology. The icon is not simply decorative, inspirational, or educational. Most importantly, it

signifies the presence of the individual depicted. The icon is like a window which links heaven and earth. When we worship we do so as part of the Church which includes the living and the departed. We never lost contact with those who are with the Lord on glory. This belief is expressed every time one venerates an icon or places a candle before it. Many orthodox churches have icons not only on the Iconostasion but also on the walls, ceilings, and arches. Above the sanctuary in the apse, there is very frequently a large icon of the Theotokos and the Christ Child. The Orthodox Church believes that Mary is the humane being closest to God. This very prominent icon recalls her important role in the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Icon is also an image of the Church. It reminds us of our responsibility to give birth to Christ's presence in our lives. High above the church, in the ceiling or dome, is the icon of Christ the Almighty, the Pantocrator. The icon portrays the Triumphant Christ who reigns as Lord of heaven and earth. As one gazes downward, it appears as though the whole church and all of creation comes from Him. As one looks upward, there is the feeling that all things direct us to Christ the Lord. He is the "Alpha and the Omega," the beginning and the end. This is the message of Orthodoxy.

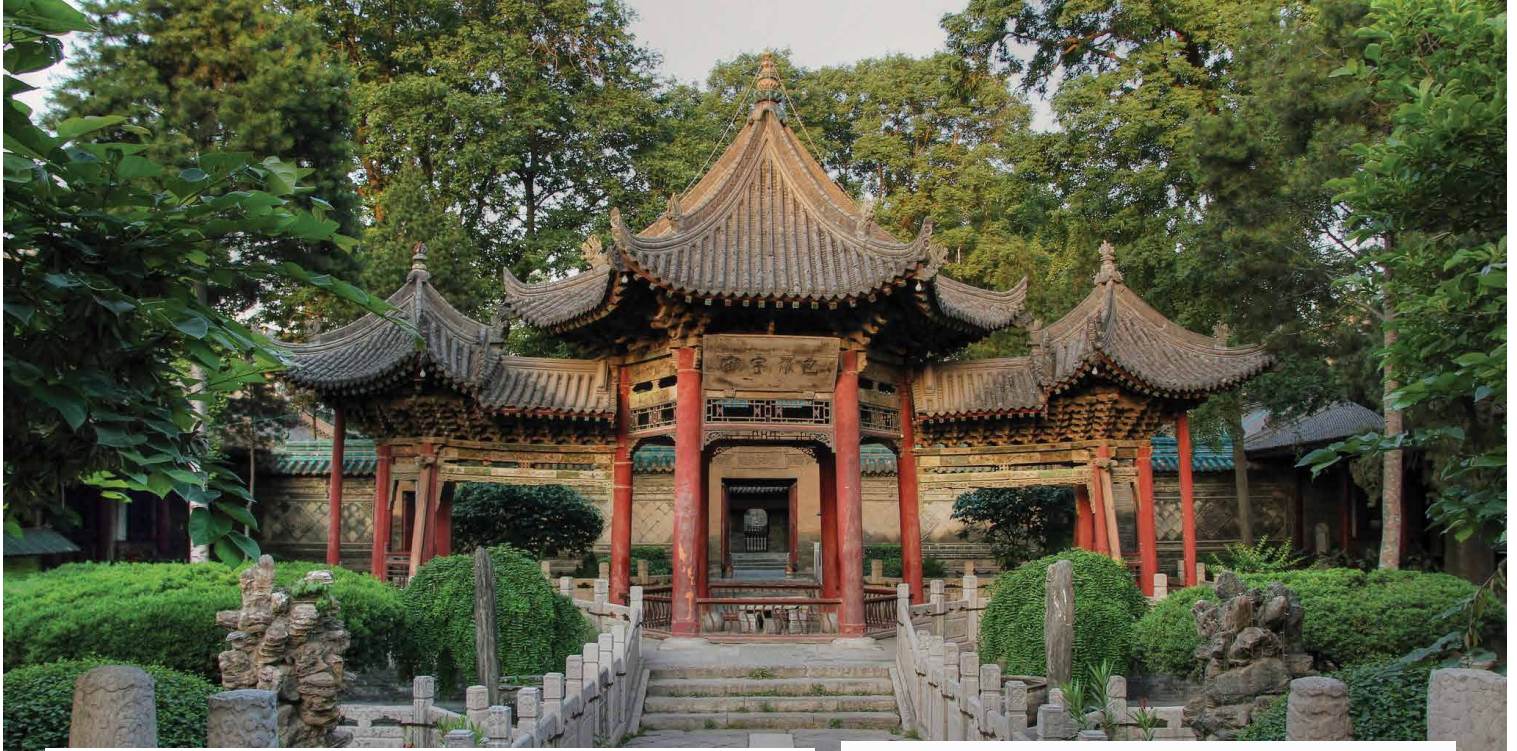
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For further reading, please go to the website <http://www.goarch.org/ourfaith/ourfaith7052#>



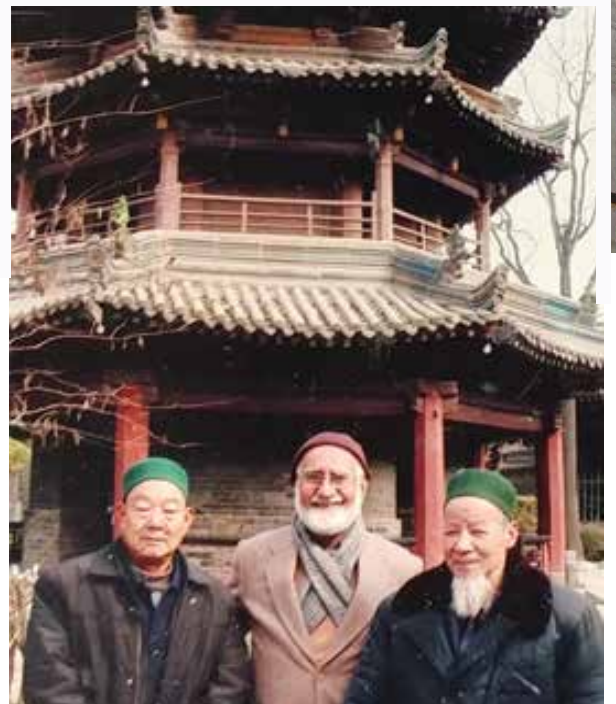
The Great Mosque of Xi'an

Mubasher Ahmad, M.A., LL.B.



In 2010, while on vacation in China, my wife and I visited the city of Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi province. To our utmost joy we were able to see the Great Mosque of Xi'an, the largest mosque in China, located on Huajue Lane, near the famous Drum Tower. Because of its location, it is also known as Huajue Mosque or Great Mosque in Huajue Lane. Xi'an is the most populous city in the Northwest China. Historically, it is the first city in China that was introduced to Islam in the mid-seventh century through Muslim merchants and travelers. The Tang dynasty's Emperor Gaozong officially allowed Muslims to practice Islam in 651 AD. The Great Mosque was built in 742 AD. It was renovated and subsidiary buildings were added during the Hongwu reign of the Ming dynasty. Emperor Hongwu (1328-1398) had good relations with Muslims of his time, and it is said that he had several generals in his army who were Muslims.

It felt very good to know that more than fifty thousand Muslims live in Xi'an, and a large population, mostly Hui Muslims, reside in the area where the Great Mosque is located. The local Chinese Muslims use the Great Mosque for their five daily Prayers. In the vicinity there are many commercial outlets run by Muslims. The Mosque is also a



The author with two Chinese Muslims in front of the Graet Mosque of Xi'an, China

well-preserved tourist attraction. In 1956 the Chinese Government at Provincial Level declared to preserve it as a historical and cultural site. Later, in 1978, it was opened to public as a historical place. In 1988, People's Republic of China decided to make it a major Historical and Cultural Site to be looked after at the National Level. However, as practicing Muslims we were rather surprised that there was a visitors' fee that we were asked to pay before entering the Mosque!

The first impression of the Great Mosque is its unique architectural structure. It is completely in Chinese style, nothing like other mosques which are of course built in the traditional Islamic architecture. There are no minarets and no dome. The Great Mosque has distinctive features of Chinese pavilions with colorfully painted beams and engraved wooden structures. The walls around the complex contain various inscriptions, including Arabic and Chinese texts, written in beautiful calligraphy on stone slabs.

There are total of four courtyards with a different monument in each courtyard. The first courtyard has a monumental gate on which 'BISMILLAH HIRRAHMAA NIRRAHEEM' is inscribed in stone artistically in Chinese-influenced Arabic script at the top of the gate. In the center

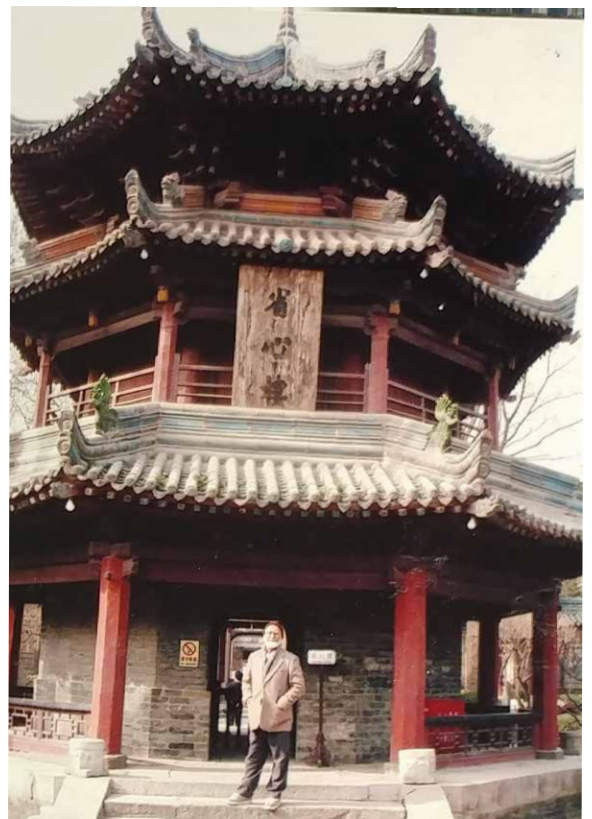


The old well



Arabic scriptures on the main gate of the Great Mosque

of the second courtyard is a memorial gateway. There are five 'water-houses' for making ablution or taking bath. Here, we also saw an old-style well that would have been used to draw water by hand with a bucket attached to a rope. In the third courtyard is a three-story octagonal wooden structure known as "Examining the Heart Tower" or "Retrospection Tower." In Chinese, it is called the Shengxinlou. Call to Prayer, the Azan, used to be made from this tower. Now the structure is too fragile for anyone to use, so no one calls Azan from that pavilion. There is also a "moon tablet" with



Examining the "Heart Tower" in the third courtyard of the Great Mosque

an Islamic Calendar inscribed on it. It is said to have been compiled by Xiao Xining – a renowned Imam in the early period of Qing dynasty in the 17th century. The main Prayer Hall is in the fourth courtyard. There is also a special waiting area for the worshipers, called “The Phoenix Pavilion”, consisting of three small structures. A six-gabled building in the middle is flanked by two three-gabled buildings and the full structure looks like a flying phoenix – the mythological bird.

The Prayer area is fully carpeted, with the mehrab – the niche for the Imam to lead the Prayer facing Ka’ba – well decorated in Islamic design of floral carvings, with an extra prayer-rug on the carpet. We offered two rak’aat of nafil Prayer in the prayer hall near the mehrab. Next to the mehrab, we saw a wooden stand with a copy of the Holy Qur’an and a tasbeeh (rosary) placed on it to be used by anyone to glorify God.

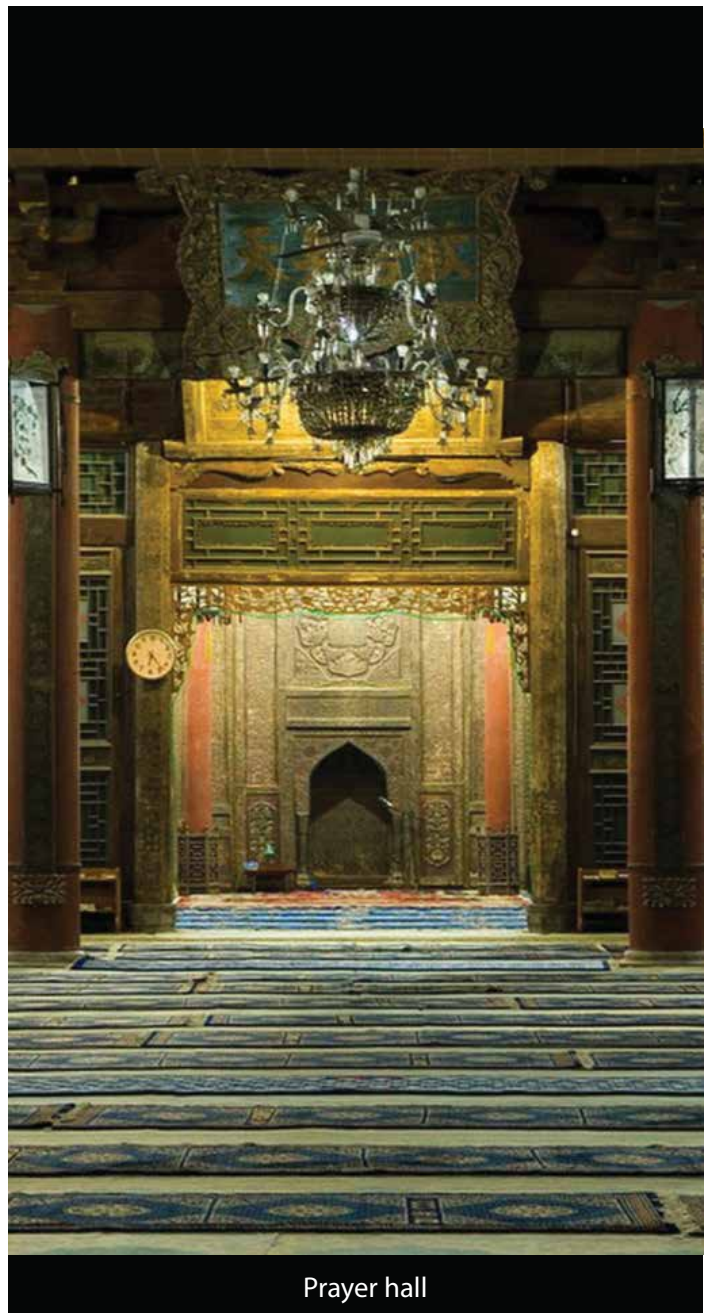
Our visit to the Xi’an Great Mosque was a unique spiritual experience to be cherished for always.



Wooden Stand



Mehrab



Prayer hall

Mubasher Ahmad has devoted his life to convey the message of Islam by facilitating Islamic information and its relevance to modern societies. He has addressed numerous academic and religious institutions, actively promoting multicultural and interfaith understanding. Currently, he is serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the Muslim Sunrise.

How Can We Build the Third Temple Together?

Zia H Shah, MD



Jerusalem old city and Dome of the Rock

In a recent interview, President Trump said about his son in law, "Do you know what? Jared is such a good guy; he will conclude an Israel agreement that no one else can do."(1)

Dennis Ross, a counselor at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy wrote an article for Washington Post in 2016 titled, How Trump could surprise the world on Israeli-Palestinian peacemaking. He started the article by saying, "Like many of his predecessors, Donald Trump aspires to Middle East peacemaking: 'I would love to be able to be the one that made peace with Israel and the Palestinians,' he said recently, adding, 'I have reason to believe I can do it.'"(2), (3)

Ahmed I (1590–1617) was the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire from 1603 until his death in 1617. Today no one would know about him except that almost everyone who travels to Turkey or Istanbul gets to visit the Blue Mosque right next to Hagia Sophia in Istanbul and his name will continue to live forever.

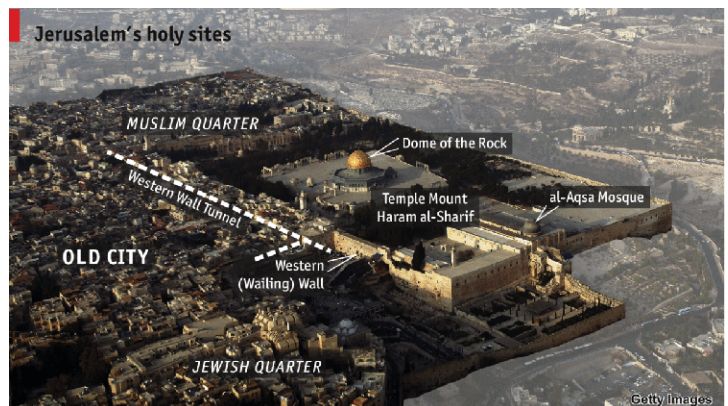


The Blue Mosque in Istanbul, Turkey

It is hard to know if President Trump really means what he has said about the peace process in Israel or it would be like another of his statements to keep us busy and bamboozled. But, giving him the benefit of doubt, I want to contribute my two cents as to how, he could settle the dispute about the most precious real state in the world, the thirty-five-acre Temple Mount in Jerusalem, which is called Haram ash-Sharif by the Muslims. For the rest of the article I will call it Temple Mount as that is how the Western readers know it.

First, a little bit of the land survey for the real-estate-Mughal, President Trump. As we noted that Temple Mount is 35 acres platform, about 10 stories high from the neighboring land of the old city of Jerusalem, the site where the Prophet Solomon (may peace be on him) had built the First Temple, in the ninth century BC. This site of 35 acres will be equal to 141,610 square meters and would be equal to about 20 football fields. The wall lengths are approximately 280 m (south wall), 460 m (east wall), 315 m (north wall) and 485 m (west wall).

Dome of the rock is a relatively small structure, which stands in the center of this parcel of land. However, in the northeastern part of the Mount there is a large empty area, which is not being used for anything and largely has trees. Reviewing a few of the pictures of the area makes it easy to conceptualize what I am saying about the land survey. Obviously, a far more detailed survey will be required before President Trump and his son in law embark on this ambitious mission.



The Temple Mount in Jerusalem with the Dome of the Rock in the middle

The picture above has labeling and you can see that the northeastern portion that I am talking about is largely wooded.

The Empire State Building took just over a year to build. The construction started in March 1930 and finished in May 1931. In other words, Trump has three years for negotiation and one year for building. The Empire State Building is 1454.16 feet high, 187 feet wide and 424 feet long. Certainly, something bigger and better can be built as the Third Temple in the empty space available on the Temple Mount.



The Empire State Building in New York City

Trump being a successful real estate developer, can perhaps build the Third Temple, which he could nick name as Solomon-Jesus-Muhammad and Trump Plaza, in the northeastern part of the empty land, which would be multiple synagogues, churches and mosques combined. May be, we can throw in the name of Benjamin Netanyahu in there also if he plays nice.

Rest of my article is about how to bring all the different parties around, for a 50-100 story building, with all the allure and modern amenities, worthy of being called the Third Temple.

Every Jewish, Christian, and Muslim denomination that has a sizeable presence in Israel gets a floor in the plaza free of charge, as their synagogue, church or mosque and in return they provide a public relations campaign to make the project a success. The state of Israel gets to choose the leaders of those denominations, giving the state and PM Benjamin Netanyahu some stake in the process.

All these denominations could serve as public relation media to promote the peacemaking efforts of President Trump.

The rest of the stories are offices of multinationals and residential condominiums. So, multinationals doing business in Israel and billionaires with surplus money with genuine zeal for peace, foot the bill.

Now two toughest parties are left for this negotiation, the Orthodox Jews and the fundamentalist Muslims.

Orthodox Jews want to build the Third Temple exactly where the Dome of the Rock sits these days in the center of the Temple Mount.

A picture is worth a thousand words and here is a picture from Pew Research Center from last year that at a glance gives us the demographics of different sects or groups of Judaism in Israel and in USA:

Different religious composition of Jews in Israel and in the U.S.

% of Jewish adults in each country who identify as ...

Israel	%
Orthodox	22
Haredi (ultra-Orthodox)	9
Dati (religious)	13
Non-Orthodox	78
Masorti (traditional)	29
Hiloni (secular)	49

United States	%
Orthodox	10
Haredi	6
Modern Orthodox	3
Other	1
Non-Orthodox	90
Conservative	18
Reform	35
Other denomination	6
No denomination	30

Source: Survey conducted October 2014-May 2015. Data on U.S. Jews from survey conducted February-June 2013. A small proportion of Israeli Jews who did not provide a Jewish subgroup (<1%) are not shown.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Writing for Pew Research, Michael Lipka, who is a senior editor focusing on religion at Pew Research Center, suggests about the demographics of Jews, "Israeli Jews are much more neatly grouped into four informal categories of Jewish religious identity – Haredi (ultra-Orthodox), Dati (religious), Masorti (traditional) and Hiloni (secular). Virtually all Jews in Israel say one of these terms describes their religious category." (4)

The Orthodox Jews are most likely to insist that the Third Temple should be exactly where the Dome of the Rock exists today the third holiest place to the 1.6 billion Muslims. Trump could perhaps convince them with the help of 90% of Jews of USA, who are non-Orthodox and 78% of Jews of Israel, who are in that category.

The Orthodox Jews can be reminded about Hillel, when asked to give a commentary on the Torah, he said, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow. That is the whole Torah; the rest is the explanation; go and learn." They could also be reminded about some of the teachings they hold near and dear to their heart, True Fasting: A Message of Compassion and Love from the Old Testament (5) and Jewish Perspective on the Rights of Neighbors. (6)

According to a recent Pew Research Center survey of the American Jews, many of the Orthodox Jews who call themselves Modern Orthodox skip key rituals. Ten percent of Modern Orthodox Jews in the survey said they did not fast on Yom Kippur, 22 percent do not always or usually light Shabbat candles and 17 percent do not regularly keep kosher. (7,8) The Orthodox do make compromises for their personal convenience, can they make some compromises for the sake of coexistence, for democracy, and world peace?

After all the Wailing Wall, which is not even on the Temple Mount is sacred; can we not safely assume that each niche and corner of the 35 acres of the Temple Mount is sacred? Additionally, I propose that we will take several buckets full of dirt from around the Dome of the Rock and sprinkle it in the foundation of the Third Temple.

If the negotiations fail, the Third Temple can still be built with the blessing of a very large majority of the Jews and the Orthodox can continue to pursue their dream that they have had since 70 CE, when the Romans destroyed the Second Temple.

Now, I come to how to deal with the hardliners among the Muslims.

In light of the dual claims of both Judaism and Islam, the Temple Mount is of course one of the most contested religious sites in the world. Since the Crusades, the Muslim community of Jerusalem has managed the site as a Waqf, without interruption. As the site is part of the Old City, controlled by Israel since 1967, both Israel and the Palestinian Authority claim sovereignty over it, and it remains a major focal point of the Arab-Israeli conflict. In an attempt to keep the status quo, the Israeli government enforces a controversial ban on prayer by non-Muslims.

But the big struggle is about the area where there is Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosque, which is in the south of the Temple Mount. I am proposing northeastern corner for the Third Temple.

The land that is not being used by the Muslim community of Jerusalem or Waqf could be leased from them and it would be a constant source of funds for them for humanitarian causes. Perhaps Trump could use King Abdullah of Jordan, who is an ally of the West and President Mahmoud Abbas for this negotiation. Trump could perhaps choose all the three previous Democratic Party Presidents, President Jimmy Carter, President Bill Clinton, and President Barack Obama to use their influence. Perhaps each one of them would want a story in the plaza of the Third Temple named after them.

If the Muslims are opposed to a multistoried building next to their existing holy places, they need to be only reminded of the clock tower in Mecca, right next to Ka'ba.



Clock Tower in Mecca with crescent on top of it, Ka'ba is in the foreground

I have shown a winning hand for all parties in the building of the Third Temple.

Now, the only possible bottleneck would be those who pretend that they want to coexist and make peace, but in fact do not. Here, I would hope that President Trump is

smart enough and strong enough to strong-arm such parties.

Thomas Jefferson gave us our Declaration of Independence and our Separation of Church and State, which has ensured the prosperity of millions of Americans for more than 240 years now. Inside his memorial that was built in Washington DC during the time of President Bill Clinton there are four of Jefferson's quotes, prominently displayed on the inside walls. One of these highlights the paramount importance of justice in our civic life, in which he used slavery as the example that existed in his time, states:

"God who gave us life gave us liberty. Can the liberties of a nation be secure when we have removed a conviction that these liberties are the gift of God? Indeed, I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever. Commerce between master and slave is despotism. Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free. Establish the law for educating the common people. This it is the business of the state to effect and on a general plan."(9)

Such a Third Temple would also serve as a foundation to achieve broader peace between Israel and the Palestinians. If such a Third Temple or Solomon-Jesus-Muhammad and Trump Plaza is successfully built, by President Trump or his

son-in-law, it would become a beacon for interfaith coexistence for the whole world and President Trump will go in history, as the greatest real estate developer of all times, for centuries to come.

I, the humble author of this article, will reminisce in my old days in a nursing home, a quote from President Truman, "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

The Jewish people, who gave us a lot of our science and technology and economics, would also have given us interfaith tolerance, not only in Israel but many other parts of the world.

Failing which the Jews, the Muslims and the Christians are showing to China, India and Japan, how petty we can all be. Patriarch Abraham, with whom we all associate, was certainly far better than that.

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 41,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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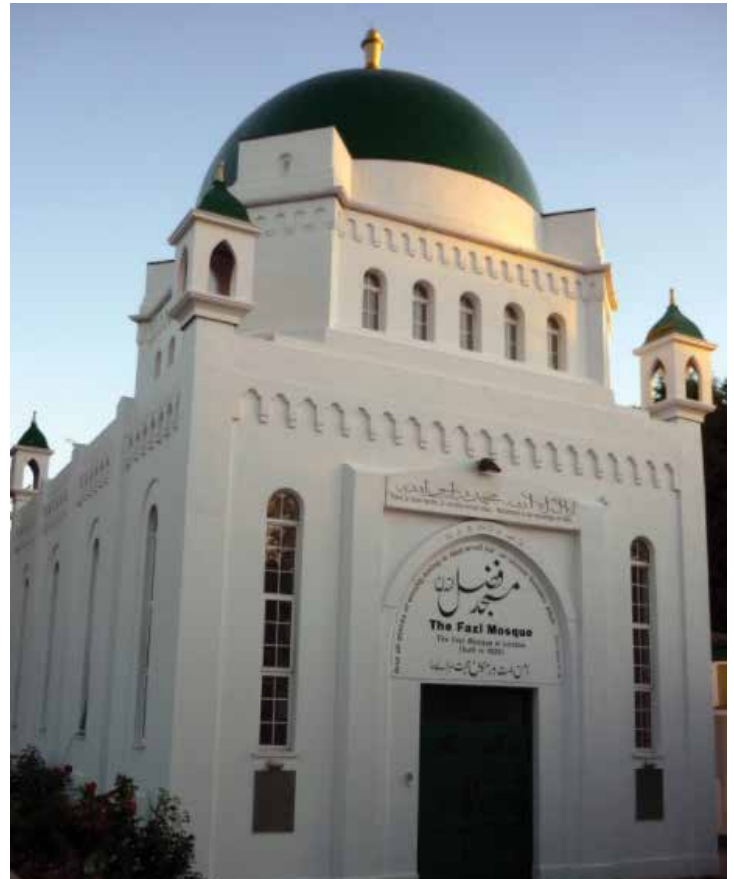
A Brief Overview of Two Iconic Landmarks; Fazl Mosque and Baitul Futuh

Professor Amtul Razzaq Carmichael

In the vibrant city of London, a metropolis somewhat akin to the city that never sleeps, amidst all the glitz and glamour there are two mosques in the south of the city, where dedicated and committed Muslims spend day and night propagating the message of Oneness of God. Under the inspired leadership of their revered Khalifatul Masih a team of dedicated followers work tirelessly to raise awareness about the coming of the Messiah. Every Friday, a message of peace, love and harmony is relayed all across the globe from one of these mosques to promote the true teachings of Islam. This is the Friday sermon of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) which is broadcast globally live via satellite TV. The question is how it all began? How come, in this city, again somewhat akin to the city of lights, South London was chosen to become the hub that calls people to the light of God?

For the revival of Islam, God has promised that in the latter days, a Messiah would be sent to clearly explain the beautiful and peaceful teachings brought by the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). In a small Indian town Qadian, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) claimed to be the Promised Messiah more than 120 years ago. Allah the Almighty chose the reign of the British Raj when the message of the Messiah was to be given out to the world. The government of justice, peace and religious freedom run by the British Empress and Queen was granted the blessing that the Messiah of the time was one of her subjects. The Promised Messiah (as) gratefully appreciated the support and liberty given by the British government to his mission. He followed the philosophy taught by the Holy Prophet (sa) that the reward of a good act is only goodness (1). Therefore the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) was committed to invite the British to their Maker and true God. He wrote books inviting the British Queen to the name of God and used every opportunity to promote the message of Islam to the Western visitors (2, 3). This was a divine plan designed to happen as a prophecy of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) states that during the time of Messiah the sun will rise from the West (4).

The Promised Messiah (as) explains one of his visions of 1891, "I saw that I was standing on a pulpit in the city of London and was setting forth the truth of Islam in the English language, in a very well-reasoned address. Thereafter, I



caught several birds that were sitting upon small trees and were of white colour and their bodies resembled the bodies of partridges. I interpreted this vision as meaning that though I would not be able to travel to that country, my writings will be published among them and many righteous English people will be attracted by the truth" (5). In this vision the word pulpit most clearly refers to the building of mosque. One of the Divinely-bestowed names of the Promised Messiah (on whom be peace) is Ibrahim; thus alluding to the fact that the Messiah and his son would be at the spiritual helm of a community that will build majestic mosques in this world which will become the source of guidance for the whole world. The first Khalifatul Masih, Hazrat Hakeem Maulwi Nur-ud-Din (ra) appreciated the importance of preaching Islam to the English speaking nations; therefore despite intense financial difficulties he sent Chaudhry Fateh Muhammad Sial sahib as the first missionary of Islam to the UK in 1913. Regardless of facing many challenges, he promoted the message of Ahmadiyyat Islam in England and

with the progress of missionary work in London; a need for a permanent centre was needed. Therefore on 6 January 1920 Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra), the Promised Reformer set out in motion to raise Rs. 30,000 for building a mosque in London. There are many heart-warming stories which tell how financially hard-up but generous at heart Ahmadis of Qadian and other parts of India made colossal sacrifices to raise funds for the building of the mosque. Later, so that as many people as possible could take part in this blessed scheme, the target of the fund was raised to Rs.100, 000. Eventually, the land was bought at the price of £2223 in Southfields, London; the day the land was bought a meeting was held in Dalhousie India, as Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) was staying there and this blessed mosque was named as Fazl Masjid by Huzoor (ra). This literally means the mosque of grace.

The foundation stone of this house of God was laid by the Promised Reformer, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) on 19th of October 1924 after passionate supplication and prayers. The ceremony was extremely dignified and sacred. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) prayed that may this mosque become like a spiritual sun that beams the illuminated rays of the true teachings of Islam in this country and other countries of the world. The translation of the original document is presented here for the benefit of the readers (6).

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE MOST BENEFICENT AND THE MOST COMPASSIONATE

WE PRAISE HIM AND INVOKE HIS BLESSING ON HIS PROPHET THE EXALTED ONE WITH THE GRACE AND MERCY OF GOD, HE ALONE IS THE HELPER

Verily my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are for Allah, the Lord of All the Worlds.

I, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Khalifatul Masih II, Head of the Ahmadiyya Community which has its Headquarters at Qadian, Punjab, India, lay the foundation stone of this Mosque today, the 20th Rabiul Awwal 1343 Hijri, to seek the pleasure of God so that His name be glorified in England and that people of this country may also partake of the blessings which have been vouchsafed to us. I pray to God that He may accept this humble and sincere effort of all the members of Ahmadiyya Community, both

women and men, and that He may provide means for the growing prosperity of this Mosque; and may He make it for ever and ever a centre for promulgating the views of purity, piety, justice and love, and may this place prove a sun of spiritual light radiating forth in this country and in all the countries around the blessed beams of the Heavenly light of the Holy Prophet Mohammad the Chosen one of God and the seal of the Prophets and of Ahmad the Promised Messiah, the Prophet of God, the Vicegerent, and the reflection of Mohammad (may peace and the blessings of God be upon them both). Amen.

19-10-1924

Many local contractors contributed towards the building of this blessed mosque. Once the building was completed, the inauguration ceremony was held in 1926. It was requested that the King of Saudi Arabia may send his son Prince Faisal to carry out this blessed task. This was agreed and the Prince travelled all the way to London to take part in the opening ceremony. However, Prince Faisal pulled out of the opening ceremony at a very short notice (7). This happened at a time when all the invitation cards had been sent, catering had been booked and all preparations had been completed for the inauguration ceremony. Intense diplomatic effort was deployed to make Prince Faisal reconsider his decision but to no avail. A telegram was sent to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) seeking advice under the circumstances. As a believer only puts his faith in God and setbacks from worldly leaders and kings do not deviate him from the path of service to Islam, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) replied advising that he would prefer that the opening ceremony should go ahead; this will be a most blessed ceremony with the grace of Allah the Exalted. The Imam of London mosque rose to the challenge of these organisational difficulties and wired Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) for instructions. The Mosque was duly inaugurated in the name of Most Gracious God as advised by (may Allah be pleased with him) by Khan Bahadur Abdul Qadir sahib, a former provisional minister of Punjab with many local dignitaries, politicians and leaders attending. The press coverage of the event was very favourable (8, 9). Afterwards, this Mosque played a great role in propagating the message of Islam to the whole world and since 1984 this blessed mosque is the centre of the Ahmadiyya Khilafat.

This mosque has a very special importance for Lajna Ima'illah; it was built by funds raised by women (10). These included funds raised in 1920 for this mosque as well as funds raised in 1923 for a mosque in Berlin. Mosque construction in Berlin could not go ahead at the time and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) instructed the funds, collected solely from Ahmadi women, be transferred to London where they were used for the construction of Fazl Mosque (11). Imagine the sacrifice of worldly poor but spiritually enlightened women of Qadian, who gave away their last penny for the building of the House of God in Europe. They knew they would never see, let alone Pray in the mosque being built thousands of miles away; but they made this sacrifice to please their God and we observe how that sacrifice is being rewarded by Allah Almighty today. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) said, "In my opinion given the importance of the city of London, it is appropriate that in this centre of Christianity the mosque should be made by women. This will be a practical answer to the objection raised by Christians that Islam does not give women their right." (12)

As God has promised to take the message of the Promised Messiah (as) to the ends of the world; therefore it is not

surprising that only after 70 years of its inauguration, Fazl Masjid became too small to meet the expanding needs of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. Thus, on 24th of February 1995, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) during his Friday sermon set a target of £5 million to build a large mosque (13). On the 19th of October 1999, exactly 75 years after the foundation stone for Masjid Fazl was laid, the foundation stone of another large mosque in London was laid by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV, (rh). The brick that was used as the foundation stone was brought for him from Qadian, from Baitul Fikr. Baitul Fikr is a small room where the Promised Messiah (as) used to carry out his writing and where he also prayed (14). There were some administrative difficulties with the building of the mosque, therefore a further £5 million had to be raised to complete this project. The opening ceremony of the mosque took place on 3 October 2003 at the hands of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V, Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad (aba). Addressing the assembled crowd, during the Friday sermon Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) explained the importance of building of mosques. He explained that it is the duty of every believer to protect his spiritual boundaries (15). Referring to a Hadith (16), Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) explained that to do ablution in a



perfect manner and to offer Prayer in mosque and to wait for the next Salat after offering one Salat is Ribat (a concept of defending one's boundaries).

The following revered words of the Promised Messiah (as) are the guiding lights regarding significance of mosque: He said that the real beauty of mosque is not its building; the beauty of mosque lies in the people who offer Salat in it with complete commitment and dedication. It is commanded that mosques should be built to promote Taqwa. (17)

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) saw in a vision that he arrives in London by sea and a divine voice calls out 'William the Conqueror' (18). This clearly explains that the success and spread of Islam in the West will be initiated by projects and plans put in place by the revered



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Al Sadiq Mosque (Chicago, IL)

Andleeb Shams Ahmed

In the 1920's affluent people of all faiths, nationalities, race, and cultures enveloped the south side of Chicago. Most of the individuals living in this area were searching for a place where they can all co-exist in peace, friendship, and most importantly, a way to reach God. African Americans in particular were looking for ways to understand why they were treated so harshly and where they could find answers to their existence, not just in America, but also in the world in general. Islam was one of their first introductions to God and peace. Nestled in this Chicago area was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim Mosque in the country, which had a great appeal first to African Americans, but slowly to all races and nationalities.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam (aka Ahmadiyya Muslim Community), which is considered as a revival movement within Islam, emphasizing its essential teachings of peace, love, justice, and sanctity of life, was the first successful organized effort to introduce Islam in the United States.

The Ahmadiyya Movement in Islam sent missionaries throughout the world to spread and share the message of God to people and to introduce them to true Islam. The first missionary sent to the United States was Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra). He arrived in Philadelphia on February 15, 1920 and then moved to Chicago to fulfill his responsibility to spread the message of true Islam. (1) Being a companion of Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as), the Messiah and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, his goal and mission in life was to not only clear general misconceptions about Islam but also to spread the message of the true Islam and bring Americans closer to religion. Due to his efforts, between the years of 1921 and 1923, a substantial number of Americans accepted the message of Islam. (2) He also travelled to Detroit to convey the message of Islam. He faced many difficulties, trials, and tribulations due to his nationality, skin color, and religion. Despite all this, nearly 700 Americans accepted the message of Islam due to his efforts.

In 1922, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) established the first Ahmadi Muslim Mosque in the nation at 4448 S. Wabash Avenue, in the Bronzeville neighborhood in the city of Chicago. Purchase of this building was made possible by the donations from predominantly African American Ahmadi Muslims who had accepted the message of Islam and

support from the international Ahmadiyya Muslim community. It is not only the first and oldest Ahmadi Muslim Mosque in the US, but also one of the earliest mosques built in America. At first the mosque was called the "Wabash Mosque," but later on renamed as "Al Sadiq" Mosque by the members, solely due to Mufti Muhammad Sadiq's (ra) work as a missionary in this area.

Besides spreading the religion of Islam and converting hundreds, even thousands, of individuals to Islam, Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (ra) had another major accomplishment that is still continuing his legacy today. He started publishing a periodical called "The Muslim Sunrise." This was a monthly publication that contained articles on Islam, contemporary issues of conscience, and the names of those who embraced message of Islam and became Muslims. He also wrote many articles on Islam in various American periodicals and newspapers. It goes without saying that this periodical has been regularly published since then (with just a different spelling of "Muslim" and now known as "The Muslim Sunrise" (3). This is the longest, regularly printed Muslim publication in America.

Building in which Al Sadiq Mosque was established was not a purpose build mosque. It was a townhouse which was used as a mosque for prayers and meetings. This building also served as the National Headquarters of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in the United States until 1950 when the offices of the National Headquarters were moved to Washington D.C. at 2141 Leroy PI NW.



Al Sadiq Mosque (Chicago, IL)

In 1982, under the guidance and approval of Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh), the fourth Khalifa, an adjacent townhouse to Al Sadiq Mosque was purchased for expansion of the mosque. As the years and decades went by, the once affluent area soon became an area mostly for public housing and became a not so highly valued area as it was in the decades before, even though this part of Chicago hosts stadium for the national football team, Chicago Bears, the famous Museum of Science of Industry, and most importantly, the University of Chicago, a top ten Ivy League University. As with any building, wear and tear took its toll. Renovations and upkeep of this property became an issue. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Chicago also built two more mosques in the suburbs. However, question arose of what to do with Al Sadiq Mosque, being the oldest mosque and needing a lot of attention and work to remain as a Mosque. The townhouse could be sold and a new mosque could have been built somewhere near or around this area of Chicago. However, since it was a historic site and the Ahmadiyya Muslim community wanted to keep the integrity and historical significance of the mosque, it was decided to build a new mosque at the exact same location, instead of doing major renovations.

A purpose build Mosque was raised in 1988 at the exact premise where original Al Sadiq Mosque existed. Under the supervision and approval of the Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (ra), the fourth Khalifa, designs and plans were made to build a new mosque that can accommodate the growing number of Ahmadi Muslims. The original mosque (townhouse) and its adjacent townhouse were demolished to clean the site and prepared for a new building. The new mosque needed to accommodate approximately 300 worshipers with separate prayer halls for men and women, kitchen, offices, and a library. Construction began in 1992 and the new mosque was completed in 1994. Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad (rh) inaugurated the newly build mosque on October 23, 1994.

As time went on, the vicinity of the Bronzeville area slowly adjusted from being an affluent and posh neighborhood to more of a undesirable one. Known as the Robert Taylor homes, the city of Chicago provided five or six apartment complexes for those who could not afford their own housing or were dependent on social services. Although the area was surrounded by buildings for public housing, there were two African American churches that surrounded the mosque. The mosque established a good and neighborly relationship with both churches. This was well before the devastation of 9/11, however, people all over the country were weary of Muslims and the religion of Islam. Members of Al Sadiq mosque opened their doors and arms to their neighbors by inviting them for educational sessions of Islam or just a "meet and greet" with lunch or snacks, the members of those churches were happy and proud to be neighbors with them and supported them in any way they could. Whenever the mosque hosted any function, whether it was for their religious holiday, Eid, or simply just for daily Prayers, the people of the churches always offered to help the mosque and attendees with security and offered their properties for parking. Members of the Al Sadiq, in return, always did the same for them. It must be noted that at no time members of the mosque were in danger nor there were any bad incidents that occurred in that area. Once again, as years and decades had gone by, the area has changed again and property values are increasing rapidly.

Almost 100 years ago, Al Sadiq mosque was established to help bring the message of God and Islam to America. (4) Now close to 100 years later, it still stands at its cause. It is one of the 70 mosques in the Chicagoland area alone, and one of 40 mosques that belongs to Ahmadi Muslims in the United States today.(5) Al Sadiq Mosque was the first mosque to bestow the religion of peace to America and hopefully it can stand the time to keep uniting and bringing human-kind together in peace, Ameen.

Andleeb Shams Ahmed lives in Chicago northwest suburbs. She has a Masters in English from Northwestern Univ. and is a regular contributor for Muslim Sunrise. She volunteers for many different charities, currently more for Syrian refugees. . She is a mother of three boys.

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An Introduction to Ahmadiyya Mosques Around the World

Anwer Mahmood Khan

In 2008, Worldwide Jama'at Ahmadiyya completed the first hundred years since its inception. At this occasion, US Jama'at published a Mosque Pictorial entitled: "Mosques around the world." By that year, we were able to build over 15,000 Mosques across the world. This four-color pictorial gained worldwide acceptance and accolade, Al Fazal, Rabwah published a review on this accomplishment of Jama'at USA. 15 foreign countries purchased tens and hundreds of copies for their libraries and local consumption.

The following review describes four distinct features of this beautiful souvenir, namely: a) special Printing; b) contents and organization; c) a digital Cover carrying all the Mosques presented in the book right on the cover in a miniature form; d) the entire book has been posted on Wikipedia with the following link:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Ahmadiyya_Muslim_Community..

a) Special Printing:

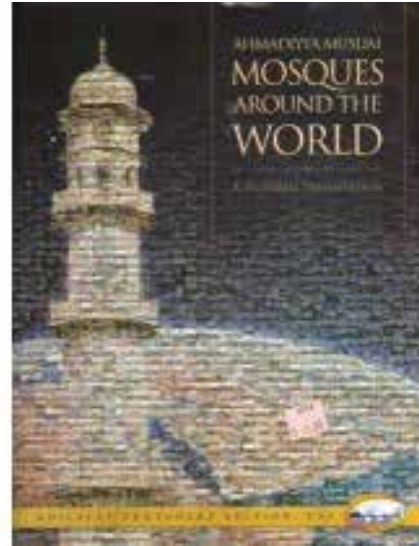
Special Collector's edition printing was done by a very renowned printer who publishes Wordbook Encyclopedia. The collector's edition printing is a binding where the book can be opened at any page and would lay flat without wrinkles.

b) Contents and Organizations:

The book begins with the Message of our beloved Imam and a few Jama'at Officials. Verses about Ka'ba', the first House of God, as mentioned in the Holy Quran, is all included. A description of the First Mosque built by Holy Prophet Mohammad (sa) is covered next.

Statistical charts of all the mosques are presented chronologically starting with the First Mosque named Masjid Mubarak built by Hazrat Ahmad (as). Interestingly the last Mosque built in the first century of Khilafat is also named Masjid Mubarak and was established in Abuja Nigeria.

Noble ladies of Hazrat Ahmad's family were instrumental in laying the foundation stone and/or inaugurating many Mosques, a chapter is presented that covers these milestones. Mosques that are built by Jama'at in the last 100 years have been organized into continents and all six continents are beautifully presented. Interestingly, excerpts of



Khalifa's addresses related to some of these mosques are included throughout the book. Every country presented, has its unique features and landscape; attempts have been made to showcase all the secular highlights of the country blended with the spiritual landscapes of the Mosques.

Another distinctive feature of this Souvenir is the addition of the Country's Ahmadiyya history duly scrutinized and verified by local Amirs. Extensive visits of all the Khalifas are showcased in the countries with pictures.

Africa has 54 countries, and by the Grace of Allah in the year 2000, Jama'at was established in each and every country of Africa. Alhamdulillah. In this book 17 African countries have been covered, these include Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Mauritius, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania and Uganda.

A great historic milestone is presented in Kenya where a group picture of the Companions of Hazrat Ahmad (as) is presented that dates back to 1896. 52 Ahmadis came from Qadian to East African countries of Uganda and Kenya to gain employment with Uganda Railroad.

It is in Abuja Nigeria, where the last mosque of the first Century of Khilafat was inaugurated on April 29, 2008 and was also named Mubarak Mosque.

In Asia, following countries have been presented.

Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Masjid Al-Taqwa was inaugurated on February 3, 2001, Assistant Prime Minister of Cambodia, inaugurated Al-Taqwa Mosque. The Governor and many Parliament members attended the ceremony. The Governor calls the Community: Samakoom" which means an excellent organization.

In coverage of Russian activities, we also have captured a historic letter of Leo Tolstoy to Mufti Mohammad Sadiq (ra) dated June 5, 1903. In this letter, Tolstoy praised Hazrat Ahmad's (as) book "How to get rid of Sin" published in Review of Religions. He also agreed with Hazrat Ahmad (as) that Jesus is not alive.

A rare picture of Mufti Mohammad Sadiq (ra) sahib in Sri Lanka is presented in a group of Ahmadis in 1929.

Glimpses of Jalsa Salana held in Thailand are displayed. The new millennium brings forth new installations of Mosque and Mission House in Albania. Hazrat names the Mosque Baitul Awwal and the Mission House was named Darul Falah.

Between 1995 to 2000 New Jama'at is established, the Holy Quran translation into Albanian published, Mosque and Mission House are established, two missionaries from Qadian were settled and on May 20th, 2007 the First Jalsa Salana of Albania Jama'at is organized. What a feat indeed!

Austria Jama'at that was established in 1936 by Sh. Nasir Ahmad. We have purchased a Mission House in Vienna. Baitus Salam Mosque was purchased in 1985 in Belgium. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) presided over their Jalsa Salana on June 4, 2006.

A new Mission House was established in Bosnia. By 2008 four chapters were established in this country that was war stricken and economically depressed.

Two Missionaries earned advanced degrees in Bulgarian language and by 2008 over 500 members joined Islam. Jama'at in Denmark was established in 1959, and in 1964, Maryam Siddiqah Sahiba the then Sadar Lajna Imaillah Pakistan makes an appeal for funds for the Mosque in Denmark to be presented as a gift to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II at the completion of 50 years of Khilafat. On July 21, 1967, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) inaugurated Masjid Nusrat

Jehan in Copenhagen Denmark. This Mosque has a unique Octagonal Shape and was funded by Ahmadi ladies. Three Khalifas have visited this Mosque with extensive press coverage. Danish flag was hoisted on the Mosque that brought great appreciation to the Minister who arrived at the Mosque to welcome the Khalifa.

Mubarak Mosque and Mission House were established in France in late 90's and Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) addressed their annual gathering in 2004.

Germany is that special country, associated with her are many Divine visions bestowed upon the Khulafa so much so that Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) predicted that she will be the first country in Europe who would lead the entire continent to Islam. It is in this country Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) gave the target of building 100 Mosques. This target has been over 50% achieved Alhamdulillah. The very first scheme to build the Mosque in Germany funded by the Ahmadi women was the vision of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra). Rs. 100,000 was collected but due to the then political conditions, the vision could not come to fruition till 2007. Khadija Mosque was inaugurated on January 2, 2007. Not only Lajna collected all the funds but also the architectural design was made by an Ahmadi lady architect.

Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra), on February 2, 1923, said:

"After much thought, I have decided that the Mosque that is being constructed in Germany be made entirely with the financial contributions of the women of our Jamaat." Almost 100 years later, our current Imam laid the foundation of Khadija Mosque on Feb. 2, 2007.

Another interesting Mosque is Baitul Aleem in Wurzburg, Germany with the following distinct features:

1. Wurzburg is famous for being a center of learning as thirteen of its citizens are Noble Prize winners.
2. A noble lady Mrs. Carolyn had a correspondence with Hazrat Ahmad (as) in 1907 and offered her help in the propagation in the country.
3. The building permit for the Mosque was acquired in a day from the authorities.
4. This is the first European Mosque that carries a Lit Minaret like Minaratul Masih - a feature mentioned by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih V (aba) at the inaugural address in 2005.
5. The heating and cooling are managed by solar panels.

In 1955, Mubarak Mosque (in The Hague) was inaugurated

by Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan (ra) on December 9 and was well publicized. This Mosque was also funded by the contributions of Ahmadi women.

At the occasion of 50th anniversary of the Mosque, Queen of Holland visited the Mosque.

Norway can rightfully boast to have the Khalifa announcing to build the Mosque in Nordkyn Cape, the highest place in Europe.

The Mission House library in Portugal became the venue of the meeting of Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) with Jorge Sampaio, President of Portugal.

1975 saw the passing away of Ferdinand Franco, the dictator in Spain and ushering the era of religious freedom. Jama'at took advantage of this and bought a parcel of land to build a Mosque. On October 10, Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra) laid the foundation of Basharat Mosque in Spain. This is the first Mosque after 744 years of Christian dominance. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) inaugurated this mosque in 1982.

Mahmood Mosque in Switzerland had a unique distinction that the foundation stone of the Mosque was laid by Sahibzadi Amtul Hafeez Begum (ra), daughter of Promised Messiah. Ch. Zafrullah Khan (ra) inaugurated the Mosque on June 22, 1963.

Nasir Mosque in Sweden was built in 1975 and reconstructed and expanded in 1999. The Pakistani newspaper Jang placed the picture of Nasir Mosque and named it as the best European Mosque.

Masjid Fazal London was the first Mosque outside India and was funded by the ladies of the Jama'at. October 19, 1924 marks the history of Ahmadiyyat for the foundation stone ceremony and October 24 when the first Khutba was delivered at this location. By 2008, 16 Mosques were established in London Metro area.

September 20, 1986 marks the foundation stone ceremony of Baitul Islam Mosque in Toronto Canada. Hazrat then inaugurated the Mosque on October 17, 1982. This day was recognized in the country as Ahmadiyya Mosque day. America Fazal Mosque was established in 1950 in Washington DC and remained US headquarters for 44 years. Now over 50 buildings have been established as Mosque and Mission Houses for US chapters. Baitur Rahman our current central Mosque was built in 1994. At this occasion US published her first Souvenir entitled: "Mosques around the World"

Petropolis Mission House was purchased in Rio de Janeiro in 1989. Now it has been converted to a beautiful Mosque. Chapter 2 verse 23 led Mohammad Sharif Bakhsh to join the Ahmadiyya fold by writing a letter to Hazrat Khalifatul Masih II (ra). He began preaching and a small chapter was established in 1956. Baitun Noor in Guyana was visited by Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) in 1991. President of Guyana had the honor to meet with Hazrat along with the Prime Minister. Ahmadiyyat was established in Surinam in 1956. A man from Surinam accepts Islam and devotes his life and studies in Jamia and was then sent as the first Missionary to Surinam. In 1971 Baitun Nasir was established as the first Mosque. Surinam Jama'at celebrated their 50 years in 2006 and printed a Dutch Souvenir.

Trinidad Jama'at was established in 1952 and Mc Bean, Trinidad saw the first Ahmadiyya Masjid named Masjid Rahim. Here, the first South American Martyrdom took place in 1985 when Missionary Aslam Qureshi was murdered. Same year we built Masjid Shahadah in Siparia, Trinidad. Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV (rh) (ra) visited Trinidad in 1991. There are 9 Mosques in Trinidad and a large school in operation.

The last part of the book covers the countries of Oceania including Australia, Fiji Island, New Zealand and Tuvalu. 1903 begins the history of Australia by Hasan Musa Khan who accepted Hazrat Ahmad (as). Sept. 30 1983 Hazrat Khalifatul Masih IV laid the foundation stone of Baitul Huda Mosque on a 27 acre parcel of land. On July 4, 1989 Hazrat inaugurated this large Mosque in Sydney Australia.

In 1972 Aqsa Mosque was inaugurated in Fiji Island by Missionary Mohammad Siddique. Jama'at New Zealand got her inception by a companion of Hazrat Ahmad. Dr. Clement Wraige who visited Hazrat Ahmad in May 1908,

Our present Imam met his progeny in his visit to New Zealand. Baitul Muqueet has been established in Auckland. The first Ahmadiyya Mosque in Tuvalu was established in 1987.

The book ends with an article written by Imam, London Mosque, entitled: "Holding fast to the rope of Allah"

C) The Cover has replica of all the Mosques in this book reproduced in mini digital form.

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RELIGION & SCIENCE

'Doctor's Orders: 20 Minutes of Meditation Twice a Day' – How about 10 Minutes 5 Times a Day?

Dr. Zia H. Shah

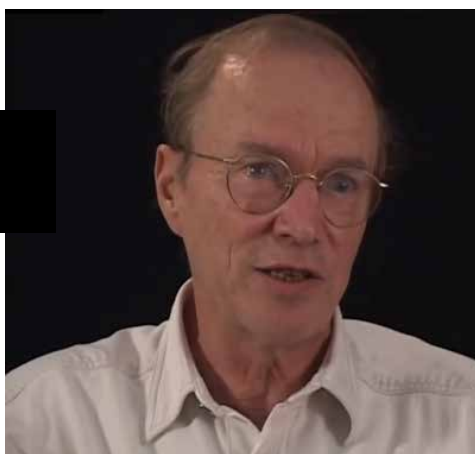
In a study published in 2012 in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes*, African-Americans with heart disease who practiced Transcendental Meditation regularly were 48% less likely to have a heart attack or stroke, or to die, than those who attended a health-education class. (1,2)

The subject of this article is: What is meditation, how are we to practice it in the Islamic paradigm and what is the scientific evidence of its benefits? Scientists generally do not study Salat (Islamic prescribed prayers), but there is very extensive scientific investigation under way on the psychology and neurobiology of meditation. According to a well-known Hadith, Prophet Muhammad (sa), said that a word of wisdom is like the lost treasure of a believer: he or she takes it, wherever he or she finds it. We, as Muslims, can benefit from meditation, as an independent discipline or in the context of Salat or Zikr-e-Ilahi, which is constant remembrance of Allah.

The constant bombardment of emails, text messages and bad news from all over the world keeps churning our minds constantly and has put many, if not most in the 21st century, in a frenzied state.

David Fontana PhD, who holds a professorship at the universities of Minho and the Algarve in Portugal, uses the metaphor of muddy waters to describe the common state of our minds. He writes:

**Dr David
Fontana**



"Imagine the mind as a pool of water that for years we have been busily churning into mud with our mental chatter. Once the churning stops, the mud settles to the bottom, and the pool becomes clear. Not only can we now see the limpid, pure water itself, but also we can enjoy other pleasures, such as quenching our thirst, and bathing. Its clarity and cleanliness allow us to see through to the bottom of the pool, and discover there a new world of interest and wonder. When the mind becomes calm and still in meditation, we come to a much deeper understanding of ourselves and of our true nature." (3)

Thousands of studies have been published that look at meditation. Dr. Murali Doraiswamy, a professor of psychiatry at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., said, "Of these, about 500 have been clinical trials testing meditation for various ailments, but only about 40 trials have been long-term studies. It isn't known whether there is an optimal amount of time for meditating that is most effective." (4) The effective dose and duration is uncertain; perhaps, it is convenient for Muslims to assume that 10 minutes, 5 times a day may be just optimum.

Salat in the Muslim tradition, in my view, has at least three parts to it. Firstly, a prayer or Dua to the All-Powerful God, for deliverance from a trial, or fruition of our plans and efforts. We could pray to a cow, an elephant,

cow, an elephant, a tree, a dead person or any false deity. But they cannot even hear our prayers; a far cry from granting it!

The Holy Qur'an says: "Unto Allah is the true prayer. Those on whom they call besides Him, do not respond to them at all. Their case is like that of one who stretches forth his hands towards water, as if asking that it may reach his mouth, but it reaches it not. The prayer of the disbeliever is but a delusion, completely futile." (5)

The second aspect of Salat is that of ecstasy, which may be briefly defined as in mysticism, the experience of an inner vision of God, or of one's relation to or union with the Divine, accompanied by an extraordinary pleasure and calm. That aspect is beyond the scope of this article and for that I will just suggest only one possible reading material here. (6)

The third aspect of Salat is focusing our mind, attention and thoughts to the task at hand, rather than it wandering away in random pursuits. This is where the meditation tools developed by anyone, regardless of religion or goal, can help us train our minds.

There was a recent article in 'The Wall Street Journal,' entitled, Doctor's Orders: 20 Minutes of Meditation Twice a Day, from which I have derived my title for this article and have alluded to the 5 daily prayers in Islam. Sumathi Reddy writes in this article:

"Murali Doraiswamy says it isn't clearly understood how meditation works on the body. Some forms of meditation have been found to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which stimulates the body's relaxation response, improves blood supply, slows down heart rate and breathing and increases digestive activity, he said. It also slows down the release of stress hormones, such as cortisol." (7)

A billion people in the world are suffering from anxiety and depression disorders and they find it hard to clear their minds of anxious and depressing thoughts. Dr. Doraiswamy says he recommends meditation for people with several psychological issues: depression, panic or anxiety disorders, ongoing stress, or for general health maintenance of brain alertness and cardiovascular health. (8)

The Encyclopedia Britannica has the following to say about meditation in different religious traditions: "In numerous religions, spiritual purification may be

sought through the verbal or mental repetition of a prescribed efficacious syllable, word, or text (e.g., the Hindu and Buddhist mantra, the Islamic dhikr, and the Eastern Christian Jesus Prayer). The focusing of attention upon a visual image (e.g., a flower or a distant mountain) is a common technique in informal contemplative practice and has been formalized in several traditions. Tibetan Buddhists, for example, regard the mandala (Sanskrit: 'circle') diagram as a collection point of universal forces, accessible to humans by meditation. Tactile and mechanical devices, such as the rosary and the prayer wheel, along with music, play a highly ritualized role in many contemplative traditions." (9)



"Researchers have found that the default mode of our brains appears to be that of mind wandering;" So says Professor Ronald Siegel of Harvard University, adding, "This correlates with unhappiness and with activation in a network of brain areas associated with self-referential processing—with thinking about 'me.'" The circuits of the default mode network include the medial prefrontal cortex and the posterior cingulate cortex. It turns out that mindfulness practice can dramatically affect the activity of these areas.

Dr. Judson Brewer and his colleagues investigated brain activity in experienced meditators and matched meditation-naïve controls as they performed meditations focused on three skills: concentration (refocused attention), open monitoring (choice less awareness), and loving-kindness practice (which cultivates accep-

tance). For the details of these techniques please see the video course by Professor Ronald Siegel listed at the end of this article.

They found that the main nodes of the default mode network were relatively deactivated in experienced meditators across all three meditation types. They believe that the reason for this is that the “task” common to all three meditation techniques is the training of attention away from self-reference and mind wandering and toward one’s immediate, moment-to-moment sensory experience. It would appear that, in this way, mindfulness meditation interrupts selfing.

“Most meditative practices concentrate attention in order to induce mystical experiences,” says the Encyclopedia Britannica, “Others are mindful of the mental character of all contents of consciousness and utilize this insight to detach the practitioner either from all thoughts or from a selected group of thoughts—e.g., the ego (Buddhism) or the attractiveness of sin (Christianity). Meditation may also serve as a special, potent preparation for a physically demanding or otherwise strenuous activity, as in the case of the warrior before battle or the musician before performance.”

Some short-term studies have found meditation can improve cognitive abilities such as attention and memory, said Dr. Doraiswamy. Using imaging, scientists have shown that meditation can improve the functional performance of specific circuits in the brain and may reduce age-related shrinkage of several brain centers, particularly those that may be vulnerable in disorders such as Alzheimer’s disease.

My intention was simply to create a little interest in meditation for you and how it can be a part of daily Salat, or an independent practice for you, or merged into Zikr-e-Illahi, meaning recitation of different verses of the Qur’an of your choice. Now, I shall link two wonderful collections of video courses on meditation by experts in this field and if you are patient, these will go on sale and you may not need to pay a fortune:

1. Practicing Mindfulness: An Introduction to Meditation by Professor Mark W. Muesse, Ph.D. (14)
2. The Science of Mindfulness: A Research-Based Path to Well-Being by Professor Ronald D. Siegel, Psy.D. (15)

Dr. Zia H. Shah is the Chief Editor of the Muslim Times with 41,000 followers in Twitter; has authored 400 articles on Religion, Secularism and Religion and Science.

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House of God, a Gateway to Heaven

Arifa Haleem

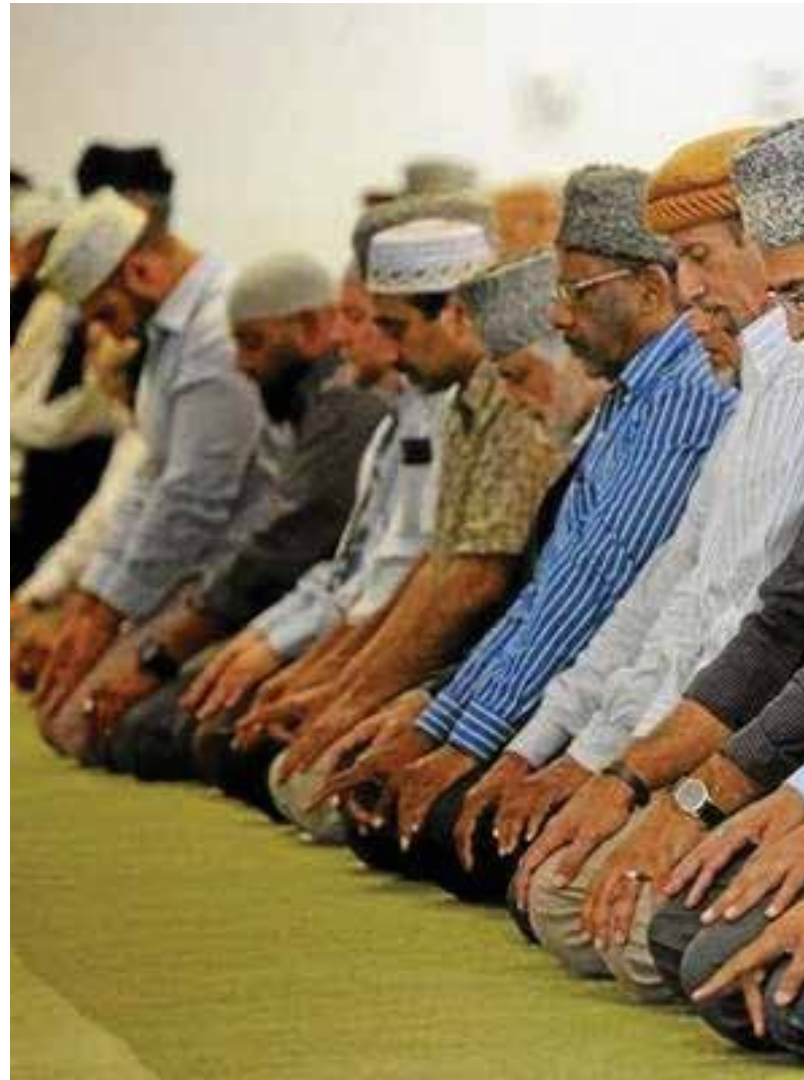
In the Holy Qur'an Allah Almighty says, "Those who reject Our'an signs and turn away from them with disdain, the gates of spiritual firmament will not be opened for them, nor will they enter Heaven."⁽¹⁾

The piety of a believer blindly embraces the commands of Allah Almighty but arrogance is disobedient and openly avoids them and when it repents, it is too late. Piety knows that the House of God and the Gate of Heaven are closely interlinked with each other and the words of God serve as a reminder to mankind so that in the hustle and bustle and colorful attractions and distractions of this temporary material world, those who believe may not forget their next journey, ostensibly to the heavenly home. This journey can be made possible only by having access to the House of God and seeking His pleasure. This very pleasure is the Gateway to Heaven and it can be achieved individually as well as collectively by abiding by His laws and commandments. In the same way, ethical codes of social and moral behavior also have a comprehensive religious philosophy that helps to enlighten the mind and enhance the spiritual condition of the human heart and soul, thus bringing those who believe closer to the Supreme Being.

House, God, Gateway, and Heaven: these four words have been interpreted differently by different schools of thought. Their literal interpretations convey a quite different meaning from the metaphorical ones. In everyday life, the words "House of God" and "Heaven" are frequently in common use. If a person's long struggle and hard work do not bear fruit and he loses all hope, he is often encouraged by others who assure him, "Do not lose heart, perhaps there is some delay but nothing is beyond the capabilities of the Realm of God; sooner or later He will definitely bless you with something good." It is also said that on the Day of Judgement, the acts of good and evil will be judged in the House of God. Reminders to live a righteous life are given frequently when Heaven is deemed to be the reward. In the literal sense, these expressions indicate that up above in the sky there is a big solid house of God where He dwells and from where He distributes the desired things among His mankind. The fact is there is no house of bricks, stones or wood where He keeps His bounties for mankind and other creation. The Immortal Being does not need a temporary material house for His dwelling which is built by mere

mortals with their corporeal hands. All power of creating and perishing belongs to Him. The House of God, therefore, is a metaphorical expression.

Any house of worship built on the foundations of spirituality is His House, where true believers worship and praise Him individually as well as collectively, and are always ready to make all kinds of sacrifices for the sake of His pleasure. This is His House where, from deep inside the hearts of believers, fountains of spiritual love gush out for the Ultimate Creator and His creation, where service to humanity is considered an obligation and where peace, serenity and a secure environment prevail.



Since time immemorial, the concept of God has remained under endless discussion. The fact is that the Ultimate Creator is Transcendent and Independent but at the same time very close to His creation. He is not indifferent to them and their needs. It is up to them when and how to call on Him. He always answers their calls and guides them in His own way. In this regard, God says in the Qur'an, "And assuredly, We have created man and We know what his physical self-whispers to him and We are nearer to him than even his jugular vein."(2)

At another place in the Holy Qur'an Allah says: "And My servants ask thee about Me, say I am near. I answer the prayers of the supplicant when he prays to Me. So, they should harken to Me and believe in Me that they may follow the right way."(3)

No human being has ever seen this Spiritual Being with his corporeal eyes or touched Him with his corporeal hands but His presence can be felt everywhere. He is a living God Who converses with those among the righteous whom He chooses, and guides them to take care of those who have lost their spirituality. He is Omnipresent within the universe and is its sustaining cause. Those who are mindful and watchful can easily see the manifestation of His Glory. The beautiful colors of His innumerable attributes can be found everywhere but in spite of clear signs of His existence, human reason is reluctant sometimes to acknowledge this and is entangled in arguments. Yet the believer's heart smiles because it knows that it has its own means to secure access to God.

The connection between God and man depends on the spiritual condition of man's heart and this very condition can take him to Heaven i.e. to that much sought-after place which is not a material abode but in a metaphorical sense, is everlasting, beautiful and a high ranking spiritual place, or state of being.

This organ, the heart, and its spiritual condition have great importance in shaping man's life. The human heart is mentioned about 132 times in the Holy Qur'an. In this regard the Holy Prophet (sa) said, "Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh which, if it be sound, the whole body is sound and which, if it be diseased, the whole body is diseased."(4)

A pure heart is a symbol of spiritual love that yearns for the closeness of the Eternal Being and passes through different states. It is a fountain of spirituality and a place of feelings, desires, emotions, intuition and revelations which contribute significantly to the spiritual enrichment of a human soul. When it is completely purified from the negative effects of this material world, it becomes a source of connection



between man and his Creator. God is All-Knowing and knows what is inside and outside the hearts of His human creation. Some hearts are covered with dark clouds of evil and are unable to receive the message of Divine words. Signs of the Divine Being are all around them but in spite of having eyes and ears, they are blind and deaf and cannot experience the light of truth. In this condition, the true lovers of God who are spiritually trained in the company of the Prophets, their Companions, or others from among God's loved ones, come forward to help and train the ignorant people and show them the light of truth and righteousness, guiding them on how to come closer to their Ultimate Creator.

The House of God has great importance in the eyes of God because it is a means to a higher end. Prophet Adam (as) was the first human being who, under the guidance of God, built a place for worship on the surface of this earth. After a period of time, under the command of God, Prophet Abraham (as) rebuilt the house of God on the foundations laid by Prophet Adam (as) and told people that this House was laid on the foundation of spirituality and it was a symbolic House of God. In fact, the whole universe is God's house and He lives everywhere. Eventually, people started drifting away from the concept of One God and started worshipping their self-created gods. The House of One God that was built

by Prophet Adam (as) and Prophet Abraham (as) became a house of many gods. It was rebuilt in the time of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) and is now called the Ka'ba. God does not care about its outer structure or about the breath-taking beauty of its cloth cover i.e., the Kiswa that drapes the Ka'ba. What matters to Him the most is the circumambulation of His servants around the House of God, true servants whose hearts and souls are full with the ecstasy of Divine Love, and every beat of their hearts utters Allahu Akbar. This place holds unparalleled significance because the holy, noble people who sacrificed their lives in the obedience and love of their Creator are resting here in peace. This House of God was the first one that was originally built for all mankind.

After building and rebuilding the Ka'ba, the need of time was to build more mosques: the first mosque established by the Holy Prophet (sa) was the Quba Mosque near Madinah, the very first mosque to be built after his migration to Madinah. From time to time more mosques were built at different places. The Holy Prophet (sa) said, "The whole earth has been made for me a mosque and a means of purity." (5)

In this era today, the entire earth has become a mosque because the worshippers of God and followers of the Holy Prophet (sa) who reside at different places all over the globe do their utmost to erect a House of God wherever they reside. These houses of worship are built for the purpose of individual and congregational prayer, supplication, meditation, and for settling the issues related to the welfare of the community in a peaceful, secure and controlled environment. A mosque symbolizes the brotherhood, strength and glory of Islam and plays a major role in the spiritual uplift of mankind. It is a metaphorical House of God that is built on the foundations of spirituality and its every brick is made of love, compassion, piety and divinity. If rightly used, it is a Gateway to Heaven where the pleasure of God may be sought by those whose hearts and souls yearn for it and who are keen to be the recipients of Divine light. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has established more than 20,000 mosques all around the globe in which the true teachings of Islam i.e. "love for all and hatred for none" are being taught. For the cause of peace and a secure environment these pious and selfless people of the community are a great help in uplifting the spiritual condition of ignorant people by inculcating in them true love for their Creator and for His creation.


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NEWS, VIEWS, & REVIEWS

**BBC NEWS**

Austria's ruling coalition has agreed to prohibit full-face veils in public spaces such as courts and schools.

It is also considering a more general ban on state employees wearing the headscarf and other religious symbols. The measures are seen as an attempt to counter the rise of the far-right Freedom Party, whose candidate narrowly lost last month's presidential vote.

Several European countries have imposed similar bans but the Austrian move is, according to the vice chancellor a "symbolic" step.

The centrist coalition nearly collapsed last week amid crisis negotiations over the government's future direction.

'Symbolic' step

Detailing the package of reforms, the coalition devoted just two lines to the planned ban on the Islamic niqab and burqa.

"We are committed to an open society, which also presupposes open communication. A full-face veil in public places stands in its way and will therefore be banned," it said. An estimated 150 women wear the full niqab in Austria but tourism officials have expressed fears that the measures will also deter visitors from the Gulf.

One government spokesman told an Austrian newspaper that the ban would apply for ski resorts such as "Zell am See" and "the center of Vienna".

Integration Minister Sebastian Kurz said it was important to be seen to be neutral, especially for anyone dealing with the public, the police or schools.

France and Belgium introduced a burqa ban in 2011 and a similar measure is currently going through the Dutch parliament.

Chancellor Angela Merkel said last month that the full-face veil should be prohibited in Germany "wherever it is legally possible". The UK does not ban the niqab or burqa.

Further measures agreed by Austria's Social Democrats and their conservative People's party partners include electronic tagging of former jihadists and a proposed curb on foreign workers.

Many of the plans must be hammered out in detail and receive parliamentary approval before they can come into force, BBC Vienna correspondent Bethany Bell reports.



ASIA TIMES

Why Middle Eastern nations support Trump's immigration halt

The US president's measure has had precisely the result he intended, giving succor to those engaged in an existential war against jihadist elements
By Spengler February 3, 2017 12:05 PM

Critics of President Trump's temporary travel ban on seven Muslim nations should remember the Chinese proverb, "Kill the chicken and let the monkey watch."

The much-criticized measure was a warning to the governments of the Gulf States, Turkey and Pakistan, who walk a fine line between support for Western counter-terrorism efforts and concessions to jihadists. It has had precisely the result that the White House intended, as a Dubai security official indicated on January 29. As Reuters' Zawya.com reported:

Dubai's deputy chief of police and public security, Lieutenant General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim, has praised US President Donald Trump's recent decision to temporarily ban citizens from seven Muslim-majority states, saying in a series of tweets it was a 'preventive measure' to safeguard the country.

Kudos to President Trump for his brave decisions... they (these people) can only be dealt with through preventive measures," he said in an Arabic-language tweet dated January 29 on his official Twitter account.

"Trump banned the citizens of countries in the embrace of Iran and prevented the Iranians from entering... sound decision," he added in another tweet.... "It is not necessary for America to host backward people, it has received enough before," he said in one tweet. "What would a

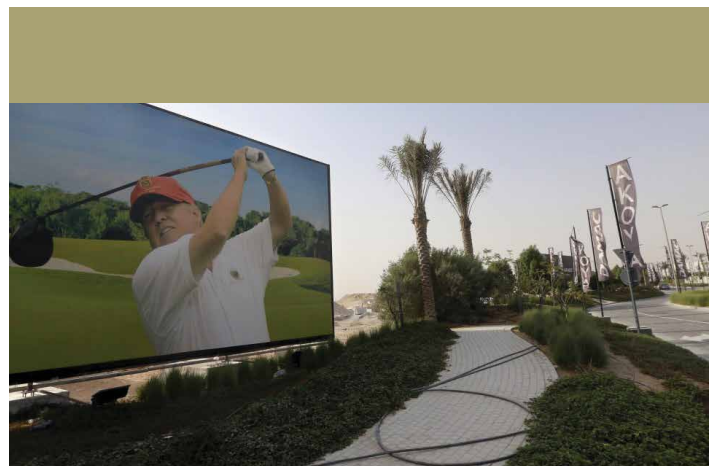
Yemini, Iraqi, Iranian, Somali or a Syrian do in America? They have destroyed their countries, they should not destroy America."

Counter-terrorism officials in Muslim countries contending with a jihadist minority view Trump as an ally against their domestic enemies.

More importantly, Trump has suddenly won admiration in Erdoganist circles in Turkey, who held the Obama administration in contempt. Writing in Al-Monitor, Hurriyet Daily News columnist Mustafa Aykol reports that Trump is the hero of the pro-government press, despite (or perhaps because of) the immigration halt.

Like the governments of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, Aykol observes, Turkey is relieved by Trump's election victory. "President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the ultimate authority, has so far said nothing about the 'Muslim ban.' Moreover, his propaganda machine, consisting of at least 10 national newspapers, several TV channels and thousands of social media trolls, has also been unusually silent about the issue. Daily Sabah, the flagship of the pro-government empire, has been absolutely silent on the ban. Daily Star, another key newspaper, published only a small and neutral report. Daily Aksam did run a headline on the ban, but only with a subtitle: 'He [Trump] must be given a chance.'"

As cited by Aykol, Daily Sabah columnist Hilal Kaplan wrote in a Turkish-language commentary that "the American president who is responsible for destabilizing the seven banned Muslim nations was none other than former President Barack Obama. It was of course bad that American Muslims were in trouble, but what really mattered were 'Muslims in our region.'"



A billboard at the Trump International Golf Club Dubai.
 Photo: AFP / Karim Sahib



Obama helped overthrow Libya's leader Muammar Qaddafi and Egypt's President Mubarak, and backed Syrian jihadists against the Assad government with just enough firepower to keep the civil war going without a hope of finishing it. The US allowed the Sunni extremists who formed ISIS to operate undisturbed in the hope of directing them against Assad – a point made forcefully by Gen. Michael Flynn, head of the Defense Intelligence Agency under Obama and now Trump's National Security adviser.

The Obama administration's dalliance with jihadists of various stripes helped throw the region into chaos, and contributed to the humanitarian catastrophe in Syria which has killed half a million civilians and displaced perhaps ten million. These problems turned up on Turkey's doorstep, literally so in the case of the two million Syrian refugees now housed in Turkish refugee camps. The Syrian Civil War also raised the prospect of an independent Kurdish entity on Turkey's border with Syria linking up with the Kurdish autonomous zone in Iraq. That is Erdogan's nightmare: the Kurdish-majority provinces in Turkey's southeast have a far higher fertility rate than ethnic Turks. Demographic pressures are a serious long-term threat to Turkey's territorial integrity, as I reported in Asia Times last year.

Turkey also suspects that the Obama administration gave aid and comfort to the military coup plotters of July 2016, who appeared inspired by the rogue Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen. I doubt that Obama helped instigate the coup, but the Gülenists had some backing in the US intelligence community, as I reported here. Erdogan's turn towards Moscow in the aftermath of the coup was motivated in part by his distrust of Washington, and Gen. Flynn has been at pains to return Turkey to the NATO fold.

Although Pakistan has said nothing about the immigration ban, its actions suggest that it got the message from the White House. After years of prevaricating, Pakistani authorities finally arrested the radical Muslim cleric Hafiz Saeed, accused of planning the 2008 Mumbai massacre carried out by Pakistani jihadists.

Through a combination of incompetence and weakness, the Obama administration contributed materially to violence in the Middle East, threatening the stability of traditional American allies such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In addition, it encouraged the Iranians to assert their military power in the region, which the Sunni states view with alarm. If the Obama administration did not create ISIS, it stood godfather to the birth of the move-

ment, as Gen. Flynn observed and reported during his tenure at Defense Intelligence.

In that respect, Ms. Kaplan at the Daily Sabah is punctiliously correct to blame the Obama administration for the humanitarian and strategic catastrophe which has befallen her region during the past several years. Western pundits who protest the supposed inhumanity of Trump's temporary immigration halt said not a word while the Obama administration steered the region towards disaster and half a million Syrians died in their country's civil war. Their objections should be read as politically-motivated hypocrisy.

The governments who have to deal with the consequences of American fecklessness, by contrast, want the United States to be strong and assertive. They are engaged in an existential war against jihadist elements who threaten to reduce them to chaos, and look to the United States to show determination. That is why Trump is suddenly so popular in the Middle East.

The screenshot shows the Asia Times website interface. At the top, the logo 'ASIA TIMES' is visible with 'EST 1995' and social media links for Like, Follow, and Subscribe. Below the logo is a navigation bar with categories: MAIN, CHINA, INDIA, REGIONS, OPINION, POLITICS, BUSINESS, CULTURE, and ABOUT US. The main content area features a 'The Brief' sidebar on the left with a 'MAIN' and 'LATEST' toggle. The central article is titled 'Why Middle Eastern nations support Trump's immigration halt' under the 'POLITICS' and 'MIDDLE EAST' tags. The article text begins: 'The US president's measure has had precisely the result he intended, giving succour to those engaged in an existential war against jihadist elements.' Below the text is a large photograph of a man in a white shirt and red cap swinging a golf club on a green field. A caption below the photo reads: 'A billboard at the Trump International Golf Club Dubai. Photo: AFP / Karim Sahli.' To the right of the photo is a 'More on this topic' section with a link to 'Mubarak acquitted of protester deaths' from 'AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE'. At the bottom of the article, a quote from critics of President Trump's temporary travel ban on seven Muslim nations is displayed: 'critics of President Trump's temporary travel ban on seven Muslim nations should remember the Chinese proverb, "kill the chicken and let the monkey watch,"' followed by a paragraph stating: 'The much-criticized measure was a warning to the governments of the Gulf States, Turkey and Pakistan, who walk a fine line between support for Western counter-terrorism efforts and concessions to...'

poetry CORNER

TAQWA & MORTAL ABODE

Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Promised Messiah and Mahdi (as)

Friends, Taqwa requires that you get rid of pride,
Get rid of haughtiness, arrogance, and miserliness

Get rid of love for this mortal abode,
Abandon the path of luxury and easy living for your Lord

It is indeed an accursed path, so abandon it,
Otherwise, forget about seeing your Lord

Embrace a life of severity with sincerity,
So that angels from the heavens descend upon you

What is Islam? It is annihilation for the sake of God,
To abandon one's desires for the pleasure of God!

Translated by Wajeeh Bajwa, Ph.D.



Women's Space

Prophet Muhammad (sa), a Champion for Women's Rights

Uzma Saeed Ahmad

Throughout the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) we find countless examples of his efforts to lift up the status of women in society. It is not an exaggeration to say that the difference in the status of women in Arabian society before and after his advent is astronomical and truly extraordinary. There is not one example in the history of mankind where a society was transformed so fundamentally, in such a short span of time. It is important for us to reflect on these transformations and understand how this was accomplished because the world today is in dire need of such a revolutionary change.

Upon examining the state of women today, we see that, globally, the status of women in society remains very troubling. The key factors identified by the United Nations (UN) that contribute to women's suffering in the world today are lack of reproductive health, economic discrimination, lack of access to education, and finally lack of political power. According to the statistics provided by the United Nations Population Fund, a staggering number of women suffer loss of life due to the lack of maternal health care (1). Women are the world's poorest group due to their lack of economic opportunities. They make up two-thirds of the world's illiterate adults (2). Lastly, women are not given equal rights in the legal and social institutions.

It is interesting to explore how all of these factors were addressed by the Holy Prophet (sa) and the teachings of Islam.

The society of Arabia into which the Holy Prophet (sa) was born was perhaps one of the most vicious and cruel in its treatment of women. Women held a status so low that their birth was considered a curse and an insult to a man. Female daughters were routinely buried alive. If they were not buried alive as infants, they would be killed when they reached the age of five or six. There is an incident in which a man who had accepted Islam and who now understood the magnitude of his sins, asked the Holy Prophet (sa):



“O Prophet of God, how will our sins be forgiven? Before the advent of Islam, we committed such traitorous and colossal sins. I had a daughter, who was so beautiful and innocent. She loved me with all her soul and would always be with me. When she turned six, I dressed her in new clothes, in which she looked like a beautiful doll. I said, ‘Come with me.’ Upon this she happily and laughingly started walking along with me. I took her to a well, and when I was about to push her in she cried out, ‘Father! What are you doing? I will fall.’ I didn’t care about what she had said, and gave her a hard push. She fell in the well and died instantly.’

Upon hearing this horrific account, the Holy Prophet (sa) cried so much that his entire beard became soaked with tears.” (3)

With the perspective of understanding the magnitude of Arab society's cruelty to women, let us examine the teachings brought by The Holy Prophet of Islam (sa) that transformed this society.

The first factor mentioned in the United Nations report as key to improving the status of women in society is reproductive health. One of the most important aspects of this is birth control. Allowing a woman to plan her pregnancies not only improves her health and life span, but also is a key factor in her economic success. This is why so much of today's efforts to help women involve teaching them about birth control. Now let us examine what, if anything, Islam, which had its advent in the 7th century, had to say about this subject. According to the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (sa) it is not unlawful to practice birth control. This is a major difference between Islam and the teachings of other Abrahamic faiths in which birth control is considered a sin. It is only in recent times that Christianity has addressed this issue and it still remains ambiguous today. Islamic teachings allow a family to use wisdom and necessity in deciding whether or not to have more children. The Holy Qur'an advises that there should be a two-year interval between the birth of each child, to allow the mother's body to rejuvenate. It also recommends nursing for a two year period to help achieve this. Abortion is forbidden as a means of birth control, although it is permitted if the life of the mother is in danger. Birth control is prohibited if resorted to for fear of financial strain. The use of birth control to avoid the responsibility of child rearing nullifies one of the primary reasons for marriage. This attitude is opposed to the spirit of Islamic teachings on marriage. As stated, the Qur'an does stipulate that one should not use birth control out of fear of poverty or financial difficulty (4). This is because Islam places faith in Allah above all else. However, wisdom and necessity do allow for a family to decide what is best for them. These factors can include a woman's health, her mental well-being, the family's needs etc. The point is that this decision should not be made out of fear but rather rational thought.

The second factor that contributes to the discrimination of women today is the lack of economic opportunity. In this regard we see that the Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) provided a very modern and progressive standard. As a young man the Holy Prophet (sa) demonstrated his respect for working women by accepting employment from a wealthy noble woman named Khadijah. Hazrat Khadijah (ra) was an accomplished business-woman and trader. Upon



was an accomplished business-woman and trader. Upon hearing of the honesty and integrity of the Holy Prophet (sa) she hired him to take a caravan of goods to Syria. His good character impressed her so much that on his return she offered him a proposal of marriage. The Holy Prophet Muhammad (sa) accepted her proposal and they had a beautiful relationship.

As Muslims, much of our faith is based on not just obeying the teachings of Islam as laid out in the Holy Qur'an, but also in following the example of the character and actions of the Holy Prophet (sa) and applying his example to our lives. In the story of the Holy Prophet (sa) and Hazrat Khadijah (ra) there is a treasure trove of knowledge with regard to the economic role of women in society. A woman who is accomplished and intelligent should be admired for pursuing a trade. There is no stigma attached to a woman working, depending upon her family's circumstances: if she has children, her primary role, according to Islamic teachings, is to attend to their education and training first. Furthermore, a woman has the right to choose a spouse that she admires and it is her right to take the initiative in a moral relationship with a man of her choice.

The lack of literacy among women is a third factor contributing to their suppression in society. In many societies it is not considered necessary for women to be educated, in fact, it is believed that females with education are in danger of becoming rebellious and immoral.

In the barbaric Arabian society into which the Holy Prophet (sa) was born, literacy was not only considered unnecessary, but in fact undesirable for those from respectable families. Neither men, nor women for certain, were expected to learn to read or write. The Holy Prophet (sa) himself was illiterate. However, according to the teachings of Islam, great emphasis is placed on the importance of education. Islam teaches that a believer, man or woman, should seek knowledge throughout their life. A wonderful example of this can be found in the life of Hazrat A'ishah (ra). As a woman, Hazrat A'ishah (ra) had the advantage of growing up in Islam from a very young age. Her father, Hazrat Abu Bakr (ra), was the best friend and most devoted follower of the Holy Prophet (sa). When she was around fifteen or sixteen she was married to the Holy Prophet (sa) and her education was overseen and encouraged by him. He married Hazrat A'ishah (ra) under Divine commandment. Looking back now we can see clearly the great wisdom of that decision. The Holy Prophet (sa) was able to personally teach Hazrat A'ishah (ra) the intricacies of the faith, and she in turn was able to pass that knowledge along to both men and women long after the Holy Prophet (sa) had passed away. Muslims have been taught how to practice their faith in large part through her intimate observations of his character and actions. A large number of the Ahadith (sayings of the Holy Prophet) - well over 2,000 in fact- were narrated by Hazrat A'ishah (ra). As Muslims we owe her a tremendous debt of gratitude. She was a recognized scholar of her time and after the Holy Prophet (sa) was gone, there was not a single scholarly issue for which Hazrat A'ishah (ra) was not able to provide an answer. One Companion of the Holy Prophet (sa) has stated:

"In knowledge of the Holy Qur'an, in knowledge of the law of inheritance, in knowledge of lawful and unlawful things, in the science of jurisprudence, in poetry, in medicine, in knowledge of the narrations of Arabia, and in the science of genealogy, I have not seen a greater scholar than A'ishah."(5)

Finally, I want to tell you about a fourth factor: the political power women held at the time of the Holy Prophet (sa). Hazrat Zainab (ra) was the eldest daughter of the Holy

Prophet (sa). She was married to Hazrat Abul-As (ra) and they shared a very beautiful and loving relationship. At the time of the Battle of Badr, Hazrat Abul-As (ra) had not yet accepted Islam and fought against the Muslims, making him an enemy of Islam. Hazrat Zainab (ra) was living in Medina, while Hazrat Abul As (ra) lived in Mecca which was, naturally, very hard for them because they missed each other. Once, Hazrat Abul As (ra) was with a Meccan caravan which was passing by Medina on its way back from a business trip to Syria. The Muslims captured the caravan, but Hazrat Abul As (ra) escaped and went to Medina in the pre-dawn hours and asked his beloved wife Hazrat Zainab (ra) for protection. In Arabia there was a political system in place that if one member of a tribe gave an enemy protection, the whole tribe was bound to that. In this instance it was a woman, Hazrat Zainab (ra), who wielded the undisputed power to command her tribe. Not only did she demand protection for her husband, she also asked that his possessions be returned to him.

Conclusion

From the few examples I have mentioned, we get a glimpse of how the advent of Islam elevated the once despicably low status of women in Arabia, as well as a glimpse of some inspiring women who lived at the time of the Holy Prophet (sa). These women were not only educated, they were acknowledged scholars. They did not only work, they were successful business women who had men as their employees. They negotiated their own marriages based on their own choice. They wielded the political authority to command an entire tribe. Beyond this, if space permitted, I would tell you about Hazrat Safiyyah (ra), the aunt of the Holy Prophet (sa) whose courage and bravery single-handedly saved Muslim women and children during the Battle of the Ditch. During the time of the Prophet of Islam (sa), we see that there is no sphere in which women were considered less than their male counterparts.

It is very unfortunate that the Muslim countries of today are so entrenched in their cultural norms that they cannot recognize how far from the Islam of the Prophet (sa) they have sadly strayed.

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FROM THE ARCHIVE

Muslim Sunrise September-December 1983

The First Muezzin

(Barry Hoberman in Aramco World Magazine, Vol. 34, No. 4, July-August 1983)

One of the most characteristic – and stirring – symbol of Islam is the adhan, the Arabic call to prayer, dramatically intoned by a muezzin from high atop of lofty minaret. Heard once, it is never forgotten.

The use of the adhan goes back to the life of the Prophet Muhammad (sa), and is mentioned once in the Quran in connection with the Friday assembly:

“O believers, when proclamation is made for prayers on the Day of Congregation, hasten to God’s remembrance and leave business aside; that is better for you only if you knew.”

Muslim tradition supplies the story of how the adhan came to be used to announce the times of the five daily prayers. After the emigration of Muhammad (sa) and his followers from Makkah to Medina – which is called the hijra – a believer named Abd Allah ibn Zaid had a vision in which he tried to buy a wooden clapper to summon people to prayer. But the man who had the clapper advised him to call out to the people instead and to cry:

***God is most great! God is most great!
I testify that there is no god but God.
I testify that Muhammad is the apostle of
God.***

***Come to prayer! Come to prayer!
Come to salvation! Come to salvation!
God is most great! God is most great!
There is no god but God.***



According to Ibn Ishaq, the eighth century biographer of the Prophet, Ibn Zaid went to Muhammad (sa) with his story and Muhammad (sa), approving, told him to ask an Ethiopian named Bilal, who had a marvelous voice, to call the Muslims to prayer. As Ibn Ishaq told the story (in Albert Guillaume’s translation): When the Apostle was told of this he said that it was a true vision if God so willed it, and that he should go to Bilal and communicate it to him so he may call to prayer thus, for he had a more penetrating voice. When Bilal acted as muezzin, ‘Umar I’ who later became the second caliph, heard him in the house and came to the Apostle ... saying that he had seen precisely the same vision. The Apostle said ‘God be praised for that!’

Though slightly different versions of the story exist, all agree that Islam’s first muezzin was Bilal. But who

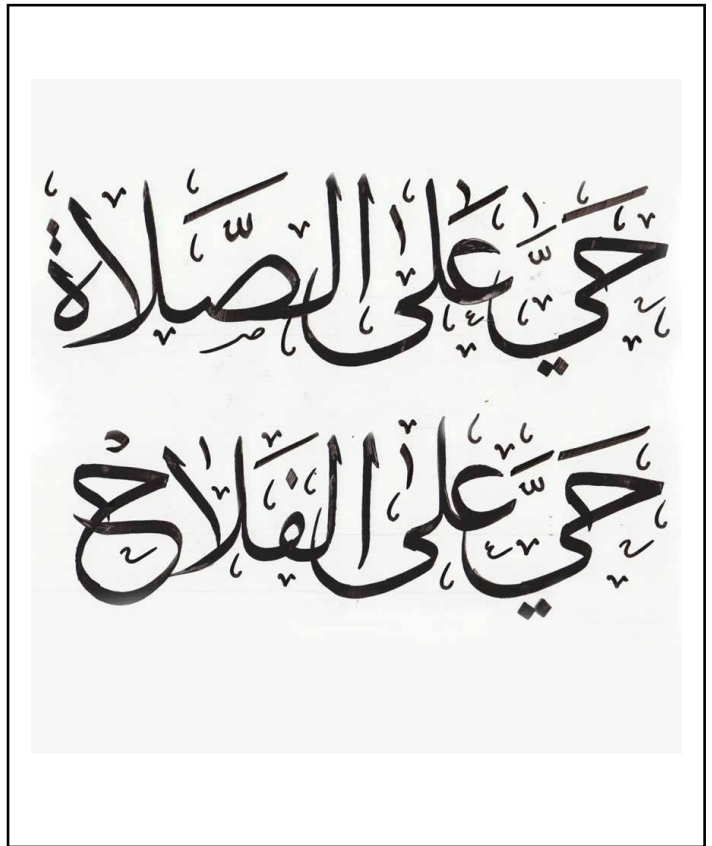
was this man whom the sources credit with such a key role in the nascent Muslim community?

Actually, very little is known. Bilal Ibn Rabah, an Ethiopian, was born in Makkah sometime in the late sixth century, of very humble parentage, and was one of the first inhabitants of Makkah to accept the religion that a local merchant named Muhammad – the Prophet – began to preach there around the year 610. According to Ibn Ishaq, Bilal suffered for his immediate acceptance of Muhammad's message. In fact Bilal's master, Umayyah Ibn Khalaf reportedly, "would bring him out at the hottest part of the day and throw him on his back in the open valley and have a great rock put on his chest; then he would say to him 'You will stay here till you die or deny Muhammad and worship al-Lat and al-Uzza'" (pre Islamic goddesses). Bilal however would not renounce Islam and eventually Abu Bakr, later the most distinguished of the Prophet's companions and the first caliph, rescued him.

In 622, the year of the hijra, Bilal also migrated to Medina and over the next decade accompanied the Prophet on all military expeditions, serving, tradition says, as the Prophet's mace bearer and steward, but also as muezzin revered by Muslims for his majestically sonorous renditions of the adhan.

Bilal's finest hour came in January, 630, on the occasion regarded as one of the most hallowed moments in Islamic history. After the Muslims forces had captured Makkah, the Prophet's muezzin ascended to the top of the Ka'ba to call the believers to prayer – the first time the call to prayer was heard within Islam's holiest city.

There is confusion about what happened to Bilal after the death of the Prophet in 632. Abu Bakr succeeded the Prophet as head of the Muslim community, and some sources say that Bilal acted as Abu Bakr's muezzin but subsequently declined to serve his successor, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, in the same capacity. Other authors say the Prophet's death signaled the end of Bilal's career as a muezzin, and that he called the faithful to prayer only twice more in his life – once in Syria, to honor the visiting Umar, and a second time,



in Medina, when he was specifically asked to do so by the Prophet's grandsons.

What seems clear is that at some point Bilal accompanied the Muslim armies to Syria and that he died there between 638 and 642, though the exact date of death and place of burial is disputed.

Yet if there is some disagreement concerning the hard facts of Bilal's life and death, his importance on a number of levels is incontestable. Muezzin guilds, especially those in Turkey and Africa, have traditionally venerated the original practitioner of their noble profession, and African Muslims as a whole feel a special closeness and kinship to him; he was an Ethiopian, after all, who had been exceptionally close to the Prophet, and is a model of steadfastness and devotion to the Faith. The story of Bilal, in fact, remains the classic and most frequently cited demonstration that in the Prophet's eyes, the measure of a man was neither nationality nor social status, but piety.



Questions & Answers

Q: Why is the Flesh of Swine Prohibited?

One matter to be kept in mind in this context is that in the very name of this animal, God has indicated the reason for the prohibition of its flesh. The Arabic word for swine is Khinzee, which is a compound of Khanz and Ara, which means: I see it very foul. Thus the very name that God Almighty gave to this animal at the beginning points to its uncleanness. It is a curious coincidence that in Hindi this animal is called Suar, which is a compound of Su and Ara. This also means: I see it very foul. It should not be a matter of surprise that the Arabic word Su should have found its way into Hindi. We have established in our book *Minanur Rahman*, that Arabic is the mother of all languages and that many Arabic words are to be found in all languages. Thus Su is an Arabic word and its equivalent in Hindi is bad. This animal is also called bad in Hindi. There is no doubt that at the time when Arabic was the universal language this animal was known in this country by an Arabic name which was synonymous with Khinzeer, and so it has continued to this day. It is possible that in Sanskrit this word might have undergone some transformation, but the true word is Khinzeer which proclaims its own meaning. It is not necessary to enter into a detailed exposition of the foulness of this animal. Everyone knows that it eats filth and is utterly shameless. Thus the reason for the prohibition of its flesh is obvious, as by the law of nature its flesh would have a foul effect on the body and the soul of one who eats it. As we have already demonstrated food affects a person's soul and there can be no doubt that the flesh of such a foul animal would also be foul. Even in pre-Islamic times Greek physicians had opined that the flesh of this animal particularly damages the faculty of modesty and fosters

shamelessness. The eating of carrion is also prohibited in Islamic law for the same reason; that is to say, it affects the moral qualities adversely and is also harmful to physical health. The blood of an animal that is strangled or is beaten to death remains inside the body of the dead animal and they are all carrion. It is obvious that the blood of such an animal is soon corrupted and corrupts the whole flesh. It is established by recent research that the germs in such blood spread a poisonous corruption in the flesh of the dead animal.

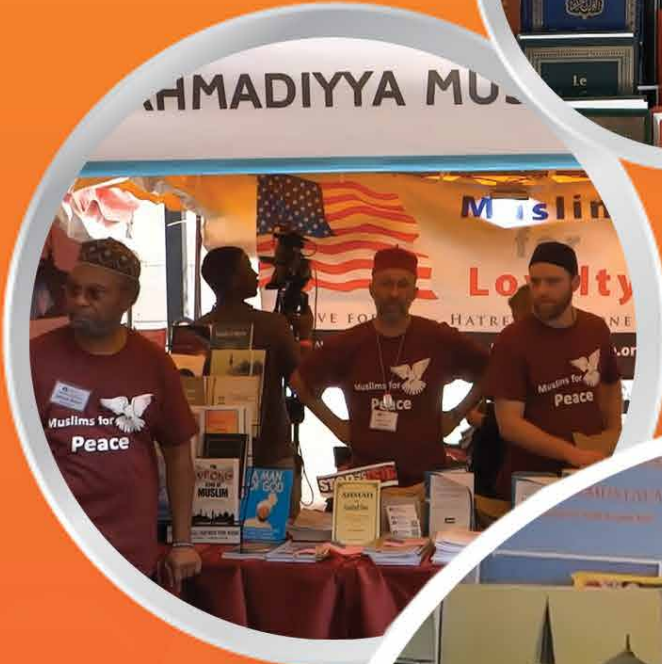
(The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam: Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) of Qadian, The Promised Messiah and Mahdi.)

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